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ABSTRACT

The Regional High School of Excellence in northern Chautauqua County, New York, was intended to be a school for gifted students from throughout the region. Six committees made up of teachers, administrators, school board members, local business leaders, parents, and students from participating school districts studied and planned different aspects of the schools, including the curriculum, student selection procedures, and business operations. The Northern Chautauqua Project was ready to implement a half-day interdisciplinary program in the fall of 1987, but planning was suspended in January 1987, because no state funding was made available. This report documents the activities and findings of each committee in the Northern Chautauqua Project and provides an accounting of what was accomplished and a guide for others who are planning similar programs in their own school districts. Major sections of the report cover the following: (1) Getting Started; (2) Project Committee Structure; (3) Business Operations; (4) Curriculum and Staffing; (5) Student Selection; (6) Parental Support; (7) Networking; and (8) Problems and Issues. The latter chapter includes discussions of funding, definition and acceptance of concepts, elitism, the need for a regional high school of excellence, accreditation, logistical problems, and teacher recruitment. The concluding chapter provides a set of crucial questions, recommendations, and suggestions. An index is included, and supporting materials from the project are appended. (TE)

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ED286261

THE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE STUDY PROJECT

NORTHERN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

1985 - 1987

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THE REGIONAL
HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
STUDY PROJECT

NORTHERN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

1985 - 1987

by

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Regional High School of Excellence in Northern Chautauqua County was intended to be a school for gifted students from throughout the region, students whose abilities exceeded the challenges of a Regents or honors curriculum, students who needed more. The Fredonia Central School District, through Superintendent James M. Merrins, applied for and was awarded a competitive grant from the New York State Education Department. A total of 14 grants were awarded state-wide.

A study of the feasibility of a regional School of Excellence began in the summer of 1985. The Fredonia Central School District became the Lead Educational Agency (LEA), and eventually Fredonia was selected as the proposed site for the school.

Dr. Merrins, the author of the grant application, was largely responsible for generating support for the program and encouraging participation by six of the nine other school districts in Northern Chautauqua County. The districts that participated in the study's first year were Brocton, Forestville, Pine Valley, Ripley, Silver Creek and Westfield. Brocton and Silver Creek did not participate in the second year of planning.

Samuel Corsi of the State Education Department oversaw the Northern Chautauqua County program grant. According to Mr. Corsi, the Regional High School of Excellence program was an initiative of Gov. Mario Cuomo, who included the proposal for the regional schools in his 1985 State of the State Message.

Dr. Neil Foley, deputy secretary to the governor, said that the idea for Regional High Schools of Excellence was one of hundreds that typically come up during the process of devising the State of the State Message. The concept, he said, was to offer students in other parts of the state the opportunities gifted students in New York City are afforded through attending schools like the Bronx High School of Science and Stuyvesant.

"The Regional High School of Excellence concept was sort of a combination of educational and commercial arguments," he said. In addition to their academic attributes, the schools were envisioned as an incentive in attracting new businesses to the state and retaining old ones, because educational opportunities are seen as a key factor in the "quality of life."

Mr. Corsi stated, "The concept was simply that you identify talented youngsters, and we are probably talking

about a minimum number . . . who have an interest in, a talent in, an expertise in a particular content area like science or math or technology or art. Then you pull those students together on a regional basis and you form a school, with . . . a very high caliber of staff (and) with a mission that was accelerated in terms of the type and quality of instruction that would be given the youth and the expectation for achievement on the part of those youth." Mr. Corsi also noted that businesses would welcome the high caliber of potential employees the schools would produce.

Six committees made up of teachers, administrators, school board members, local business leaders, parents and students from the participating school districts studied and planned different aspects of the school, including the curriculum, student selection procedures and business operations. The Northern Chautauqua project was ready to implement a half-day, interdisciplinary program in the fall of 1987. However, planning was suspended January, 1987, when it became evident that no state funding for the Regional High School projects would be included in the 1987 budget. Because of the depressed condition of the local economy, planners felt that there was no chance of supporting the school through local funds.

Chautauqua County, located in southwestern New York, is bordered by Lake Erie to the northwest, the state of Pennsylvania to the south and Erie County to the northeast. Major cities nearby include Buffalo, New York and Erie, Pennsylvania. The county is part of what has become known as the "Rust Belt," due to the once mighty steel factories that now, in many cases, are idle. Despite the nickname, metalworking remains the top industry in northern Chautauqua County in terms of income, followed by food processing, education and farming. The area's manufacturing and population are concentrated in the Dunkirk-Fredonia area, which is also the geographic center of the north county. About 60,000 people live in northern Chautauqua County - more than 26,000 of them in Dunkirk and Fredonia.

The northern region of the county is primarily rural, and the county has the greatest number of farms in the state at 2,200. Grape farming predominates, with more than 80,000 tons of grapes produced annually. The county ranks 11th in the nation in terms of acres of grapes - the top 10 are in the state of California.

Manufactured goods from the county include specialty metals, tools, dies and bearings, nuclear and aerospace components, grain processing machinery, electronic components, paper folding and printing machines, pet foods and men's trousers. A 133-bed hospital is located in Dunkirk, and the State University College at Fredonia offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of programs.

with an enrollment of approximately 5,000 students.

As planned by the working committees, the Regional High School of Excellence would have been located at Fredonia High School, a location central to the participating school districts. Approximately 100 students from grades 9 through 12 would have attended the school, and a comprehensive system of testing and evaluation had been devised to choose its students. The top 1 to 3 percent of students in the region, regardless of which home school they attended, were the anticipated student body of the school. Their selection would be based only in part on past academic performance, because a number of gifted students are underachievers in terms of their grades and their special abilities may not be readily apparent.

The school would have operated five days a week, from 8:00 A.M. to 11:45 A.M. The students would return to their home schools for afternoon classes and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum would have been non-traditional, with the first two years of study centered around a core of common courses including language arts, mathematics, social studies and science. An interdisciplinary approach, based on broad societal themes or issues would characterize the core courses. In the third and fourth years at the school, the program would become more individualized, giving students an opportunity to explore their own interests through programs such as internships and mentorships.

In short, the Regional High School of Excellence would offer intensive, specialized programs focusing on selected subject areas for a selected number of students. It would foster high achievement in selected academic disciplines. It would be characterized by a challenging curriculum, innovative teaching strategies and use of a wide variety of learning resources. It would involve parents, the private sector, and higher education, in a program of unique character, not already available in the participating districts.

Teachers from local school districts would be encouraged to teach at the School of Excellence and would be shared with their local districts for part of each school day, until student enrollment had grown enough to justify a full-time staff. Conferences with students and cooperative team planning with other Regional High School teachers would be important parts of the teachers' day. Experts from business and industry, higher education, government and various professions would have been called upon to help as instructors during the 9th and 10th grades, and to serve as mentors or supervisors for internships and independent study units during the 11th and 12th grades.

Dr. Poley said the governor's office did not have

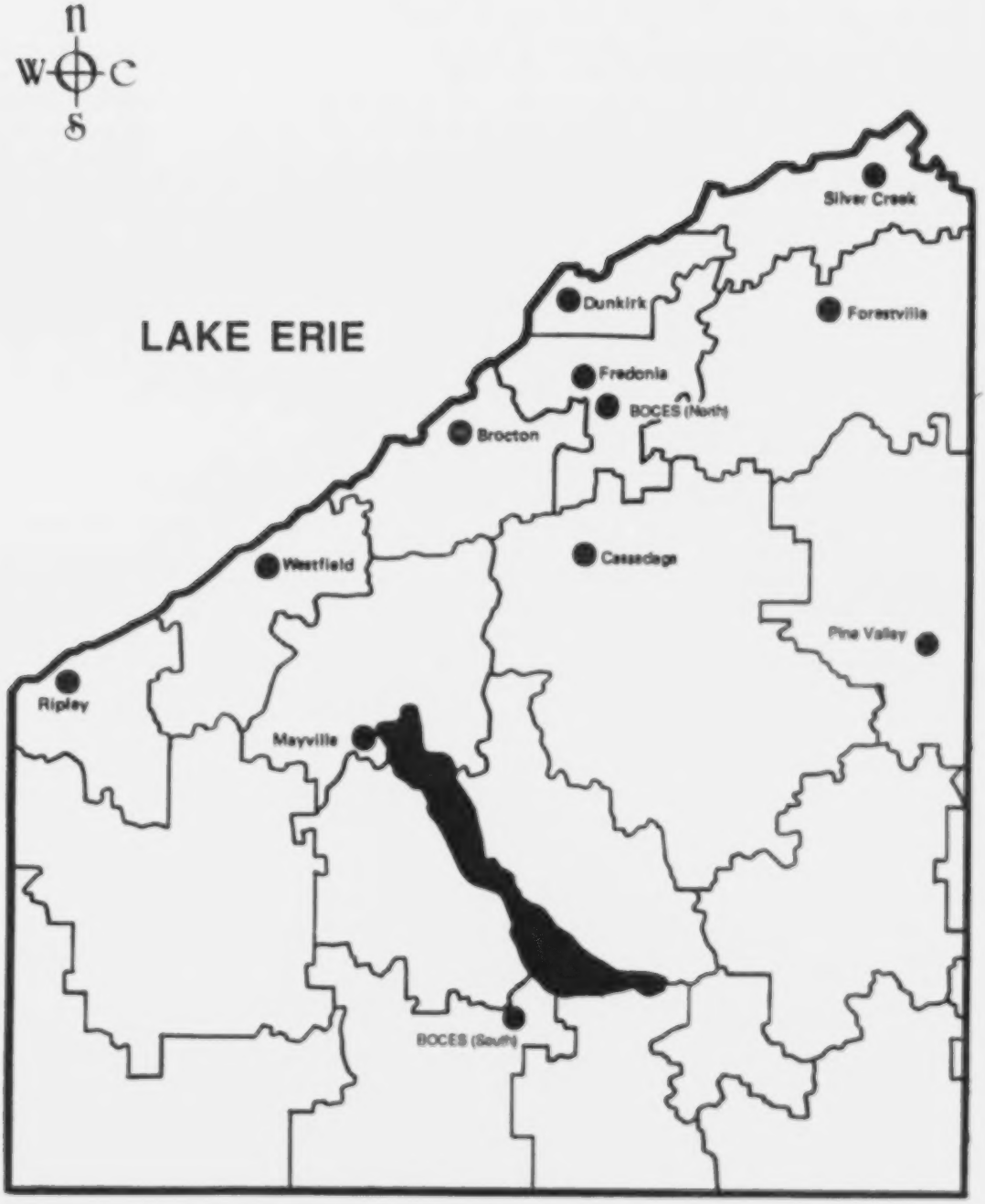
specific expectations for the projects, however, they were committed to full day programs. He said the office originally wanted to require that the programs be full day, but allowed part time, shared programs to be planned when it appeared that most of the projects would choose that option.

Mr. Corsi said, "I know . . . (the governor) was very interested in the concept of a complete school, where students would matriculate for a whole day in a separate regional school setting," Mr. Corsi said. "What happened with the projects that we (the State Education Department) were managing, for the most part. . . was that after looking at the support for and feasibility of a complete school, most of the grantees chose to become engaged in and plan for what they called a "shared school," where the students would come for only a portion of their day to take certain specified courses and then go back and remain in their home school setting."

One emphasis that the state looked for in the Regional High School projects was a gauge of how people in the community felt about the program. "We asked people to think about . . . 'How are you going to test out the feasibility of and support for a Regional High School concept?'" Mr. Corsi said. " At least in the first year you found Fredonia and most of the other grantees doing surveying in their communities of a number of audiences to (ask) 'What do you think of the idea and what do you think its impact will be and how feasible do you think it will be?' Because if a program like this, regional in nature, is to be successful, it probably, we thought, needs the support of a number of constituencies across a region."

Instead of continued funding of the 2-year-old Regional High School of Excellence projects in operation across the state, the governor proposed construction of a residential high school for gifted students, located on Long Island. Mr. Foley said that the governor's office did not "recommend against" continuing funding for the study projects, but rather proposed the residential school as "the most viable way to go." It was becoming increasingly apparent, he said, that problems involving transportation, pulling students out of their home high schools and others were major roadblocks for many of the existing projects. "The notion of a full-time boarding school seemed most efficient," he said, in alleviating many of those concerns. In addition, it seemed the optimum way to provide the most comprehensive and highest quality programming for gifted students.

This manual is intended to document the activities and findings of each committee in the northern Chautauqua County project, and to provide both an accounting of what was accomplished and a guide for others who are planning or considering similar programs in their own school districts.



CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY, NEW YORK

Miles One-way from Fredonia to:

Brocton - 14	Pine Valley - 30
Cassadaga - 18	Ripley - 30
Dunkirk - 6	Silver Creek - 14
Forestville - 15	Westfield - 20
Mayville - 30	

CHAPTER 2 GETTING STARTED

During the summer of 1985, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was sent to all (approximately 730) school districts and BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) in New York state. The RFP announced that one million dollars had been appropriated for the development of Regional High Schools of Excellence. These would be special schools where gifted students would be challenged in unique, advanced academic programs that could not be offered by schools on an individual basis.

Both shared programs and complete programs would be considered. In a shared program, the students would spend part of their day at the School of Excellence, and return to their home school for the remainder of the day. In a complete program, the students would attend the School of Excellence for the entire day. The RFP indicated that residential programs would not be considered.

The governor had an interest in the development of Schools of Excellence as a means of conveying that New York state places a high value on academic excellence, is attentive to the educational development of all students, is an educational leader in the United States, and is an attractive place to live and work. In addition, these schools would have represented talent pools, from which businesses and industries could draw employees. This could be an important incentive for businesses in deciding to locate or remain in New York state, and could help improve the state's economic environment.

From an educator's standpoint, this RFP represented an opportunity for furthering growth, development, and promotion of education for gifted and talented students in the public schools. The possibilities were especially intriguing because the project focused on secondary education. In recent years, programs have been developed for gifted and talented students at the elementary level, but traditionally there is no follow-through at the secondary level. This grant represented an opportunity to explore new possibilities in this area.

Dr. James M. Merrins, superintendent of the Fredonia Central School District, was especially interested in starting a project. "It (the RFP) was in the area of gifted education, which is one of my professional interest areas, and an area in which I feel American education should be showing improvement. There was money being set aside to fund development in this area. It was a competitive grant, and it

was available to whoever wanted to do the work."

An important part of putting together a successful proposal for the School of Excellence required securing commitments from neighboring districts to participate in the study. In doing so, Dr. Merrins changed some of his original ideas on the program, acting on suggestions offered by administrators in other local districts who felt that certain things "would or wouldn't fly." This input, from the very beginning of the project, helped to prevent potential problems and contributed to the evolution of a successful proposal.

Area superintendents were contacted by Dr. Merrins, and school board presidents were contacted by Mrs. Marilyn Maytum, president of the Fredonia Board of Education. Because the RFP had been sent to each district and BOCES in the state, most of them were aware of the availability of grant money for School of Excellence projects.

Dr. Merrins contacted the nine other districts located in the northern end of Chautauqua County regarding participation in the study. Of these nine, six agreed to participate with Fredonia in the first year of the study: Brocton, Forestville, Pine Valley, Ripley, Silver Creek, and Westfield. Cassadaga, Dunkirk, and Mayville declined.

Mr. Sam Danton, former Cassadaga Superintendent (now retired), stated that, "My board was receptive, but they were concerned about the finances. Dr. Merrins seemed to think that it could be totally funded by the state, and I had my doubts about that. The rhetoric was beautiful, but you have to have the finances to back up the rhetoric."

Mr. Danton said he was also against the half-day approach, but would have favored having the school for two full days out of the week. He did not favor the half-day approach because "the kids would spend too much time on a bus," he said.

Mr. Danton was also concerned that taking the brightest students out of the classroom would adversely affect the learning experience of the others. "I think there are times when you need to have gifted students together to share their thoughts and experiences. But there's a lot to be gained in the home school in a heterogeneous experience. But, in all fairness, you need to give the gifted student an opportunity to explore on his own."

Mr. Danton indicated that his administrative team felt that gifted students were an important component of the student body that should not be removed entirely from the home school. The administrators favored the concept that students of all ability levels can learn a lot from one another, he said.

"Most teachers were not supportive of the school of excellence concept," Mr. Danton said. "They were very protective of their own turf, and that was understandable because this was a new concept."

The Dunkirk School District chose not to participate in the study primarily because they did not feel a need for the school. Miss Terry Wolfenden, superintendent, said," It was discussed with the (Dunkirk) Board of Education, and both the board and I felt that Dunkirk would not opt to participate, at least at the initial stage. We felt that we had a very strong high school program that meets the needs of the so-called top track or gifted student population. We offer many classes or courses that other high schools in the area are not able to offer." Examples cited by Miss Wolfenden included a course in anatomy, and a "very advanced" computer program.

Dunkirk was also very concerned about the cost involved with such a program, and expressed doubts about the availability of continued funding once the program started. Time constraints involved in busing students from Dunkirk to the Fredonia location for the School of Excellence were another concern. Miss Wolfenden stated that "if you are going to bus students, even from a neighboring district to another, it takes a certain amount of time out of the instructional day. You have to weigh that out; is it really going to be worth the loss of an hour, maybe an hour and a half, in transportation mid-day? While the students may be getting an excellent opportunity to take a few courses that aren't offered in the home school, what are they losing in the interim? That's a hard judgement to make."

Mayville indicated that, though they were supportive of the concept, they felt their geographic location in relation to Fredonia was a major obstacle. Funding constraints were also a major concern. In a letter to Dr. Merrins dated July 23, 1985, Mr. Richard Casadonte, superintendent, Mayville Central School, stated:

> The decision was a result of two considerations. First, it was generally felt that agreeing to join the study should mean a commitment of more than one year if the grant was approved. The anticipated merit of a program such as this, should require a district to insure its continuance and not be dependent on grant or special funding. Our district's only assurance of any appreciable amount of state aid comes in the form of BOCES aid and so this would be the direction we would like to see the plan develop.
>
> The other consideration has to do with

transportation. As you know, our school's alignment for BOCES services is with the Hewes Center [located in the southern end of Chautauqua County]; consequently, all special transportation heads in that direction. This factor, along with my understanding that the transportation for the program is not yet aidable, would be under current conditions a cost extremely difficult to justify based on the small number of students we would have eligible.

Again, we thank you for your offer and think it's a great idea. We hope that our gifted youngsters will be able to participate in something similar, but possibly under some other configuration.

Reaction was mixed among the other superintendents and school boards who agreed to participate in the project. Dr. Merrins felt that the other superintendents were cautiously supportive. "It would cost them nothing if they were willing to work with the project in the first year, to see how it would progress," he said. "Some superintendents were really excited about it, and wanted to see a program get started. Others believed they already had a program, (while) others had some political forces driving them away from the project."

Superintendents were also concerned that the program would take away the "best" students from their home schools. This was an issue that continued to make its presence felt throughout the project, and was also one for which there was no easy answer.

The position of the Fredonia Board of Education was crucial to the success of the study. With Fredonia acting as the Lead Educational Agency (LEA) for the study, the board's position was not only important, but also of high interest to the districts asked to participate. Because the Fredonia board was sensitive to community feedback on the project (particularly in terms of how it was to be funded), they took the position of being enthusiastic as long as the state was funding the project. They made it very clear from the beginning, that if the state discontinued funding at some point, they were not going to be in a position to pay for the program with local tax dollars.

It should be noted that all work on the project, and all budgets drafted at various stages of the project, reflected the assumption that there would be full state funding for implementation of the program. The economic climate of Northern Chautauqua County is not one that could support a School of Excellence solely through local resources. Almost everyone involved with the project agreed that local taxpayers would not fund such a program.

Alternative sources of funding, other than the state, were never fully explored. Because the state had first proposed these School of Excellence projects, it was felt that the state would, or should, make good on its original commitment, and not withdraw funding farther down the road.

The Brocton Central School District chose to participate in the first year of the study based on the same premise. Brocton Superintendent Richard Gloss felt that "it won't hurt to be involved in the study, and see what they have to offer. . .as long as the state was funding it. If the state wasn't going to fund it, (Brocton) wasn't going to be in it."

As it turned out, Brocton chose not to participate in the project during the second study year. Mr. Gloss indicated that the Brocton representatives on the Advisory Committee did not like what they were hearing about the overall program. "I think a comment was made at one time that hurt more than anything else that it was a program made by Fredonia for Fredonia," he said. "With that in mind, when it came around to the second year, we couldn't see any point in continuing with a study that we were already having questions about. We didn't want Dr. Merrins or the Fredonia board to think that Brocton was in there for another year with the idea in our own minds that we were going to drop out of it at the end of it. State funding or no state funding, we weren't going to be going with it. It just didn't seem like it was going to be the thing for Brocton."

Also participating the first year but not the second was the Silver Creek Central School District. At the time they decided to participate in the project, the Silver Creek Board of Education was not very familiar with the project. However, because of an interest in new and better program possibilities, they decided to participate. "It was a motherhood and apple pie issue," said Silver Creek Superintendent James E. Goodspeed. "We couldn't say, 'No, we don't want anything to do with better educational programs and new thrusts in educational service,' and so forth. Of course we had to say 'Yes, we'll be involved in looking at this.'"

Mr. Goodspeed said his initial reaction to the concept was "somewhere between moderate skepticism and a feeling of 'maybe it will work'." His skepticism was based in part on the idea of "trying to sort out such a small number of top notch students. Obviously the topic of elitism in education comes to mind. As a matter of fact, I guess that the elitism issue was the thread running through the whole program that made us decide to drop it after the first year. We couldn't justify the time and expense on a concept that we weren't so sure was right."

"The (Silver Creek) faculty had a very strong feeling that the bigger thing it would do is weaken the educational thrust in our home school, because some of the natural 'spark plugs' in the class would be removed. We didn't know exactly what it would do for those more able and ambitious kids who were in fact in the program, but there was a fairly strong feeling by faculty and others that those kids are going to do pretty well on their own.

"They are bright, they are able and ambitious, maybe even gifted, and to that extent we can keep them going here and they can progress well beyond the other youngsters at our school, given computers and libraries and all the technology we have available these days.

"We didn't feel it was necessary to create a whole new school with its own board of education and funding, and take those kids out of our system and put them someplace else," Mr. Goodspeed continued. "The whole thing just became very heavy and after one year, we decided 'Gee, we don't want to shoot down this plan that these other people are gung-ho about, but we just don't feel it's worth our participation. If they go ahead with it, and something very fine develops, that's good.' We gave it a good shot, looked at it carefully, thought about it for a year, and it just wasn't something we wanted much more to do with."

The Pine Valley Central School District chose to participate in the project partly because they already had gifted and talented programs going on in their school. The Pine Valley Board of Education therefore had some familiarity with gifted education, and felt that there was merit in it. Pine Valley Superintendent Franklin Russell stated that Pine Valley's own gifted program had been developed locally, using local funds. They saw the opportunity to be involved with the School of Excellence project as a means "to expand what we were currently doing." Mr. Russell also felt that the districts that had already had some experience with gifted and talented education "may have responded a little more favorably than those that weren't really into some active programs at that point."

The Pine Valley Board of Education "tied into the School of Excellence concept fairly quickly as far as the concept," he said. "Our cautious concerns were about such things as a half-day versus a full-day program, and staffing concerns. Also, what kinds of commitments were going to be required of the local school districts in the long term?" However, the board felt that these were not reasons not to participate, he said. Their approach was to find solutions to problems as they arose.

Westfield Superintendent Robert Olczak, when initially

approached by Dr. Merrins about taking part in the study project, felt that the Westfield board would be very positive about it. "I took it to the (Westfield) board and said that I was interested and supportive of the (School of Excellence) concept. The board passed a resolution saying that Westfield would like to be part of the study during the first year. Later that year, Dr. Merrins came, met with our board, gave a presentation about the project, and also later met with our faculty. We had a public meeting, that I think the statistics would show was very well attended for the size of our district. A group of about 30 parents were present. I don't think they would have been there if they weren't supportive."

When Dr. Merrins presented the concept to former Ripley Superintendent Brian Bower, Dr. Bower supported the idea. Mr. Ralph Scazafabo, Ripley High School Principal, said, "The school board heartily agreed." Their interest in the project was based, in part, on their recognition that much more was being spent on remedial and handicapped students than bright students. "They felt it was a way to give something to the kids on the high end of the scale, the same way we do for the kids on the low end," he said. The Ripley administration and school board supported the project throughout the entire two-year period.

The Forestville Superintendent and Board of Education initially had a positive response to the project. "Personally, I believe in it," said William Loftus, Forestville Superintendent. "I believe those kids should have just as much of a chance as the handicapped kids. The old cliche that they're going to learn in spite of you, that's erroneous, that's irrational, that's bad thinking."

Mr. Loftus went on to comment, "I could see philosophically where Dr. Merrins was going. He wanted just the top three percent at this high school. My contention, there you're talking gifted. If you're talking gifted and talented, you're talking about that kid that's talented, that's one step down from gifted, but above average. Now what are you going to do for him? It didn't seem like we were doing anything for him. I had a little struggle, philosophically, with just isolating it on this (gifted) group. But it wasn't going to stop the development or the dreaming of it, because number one it's better than nothing to start with. The only condition that I gave Dr. Merrins was that I would not support it if it was an all day program. You're not going to take those kids away from me totally. They do have an influence on the school."

The BOCES Issue

One question that was frequently raised as Dr. Merrins

approached other superintendents about participating in the School of Excellence study project was, "Why wasn't BOCES going to act as the LEA?" "Dr. Merrins idea was to produce a consortium," said Forestville Superintendent William Loftus. "Whenever you deal with consortiums you always naturally think of BOCES. BOCES becomes the LEA because they have the money and can get reimbursement funds.

"The first thing superintendents think of is money: 'How am I going to get the money to support this new program?'" Mr. Loftus said. "Well, it's only logical to think that it will be a BOCES program. Dr. Merrins didn't really want it to be a BOCES program. He had his own reasons, and had already done some legwork on it."

Dr. Merrins had several grounds for wanting the program at Fredonia, and not BOCES. He felt that Fredonia was "psychologically safe" for very bright students. "The Fredonia staff is used to working with a 'bright', academic population," he said. "One thing that you find at Fredonia, it is still okay to use your 'brains.'

"Fredonia is recognized as a high-powered educational organization in terms of its student body and educational program. At Fredonia, acceleration, being bright, performing well, are not in opposition to the value system found in the community. You don't 'build' that in. It's a function of the population and the community. The values of the school are a reflection of the community. That's what I was referring to in terms of 'psychologically safe.'"

Another concern Dr. Merrins had regarding having the program at BOCES was that it might "dilute" the program. This concern was shared by many others who were involved with the project. Some members of the various working committees felt that the program would lose some of its strength if it were run through BOCES. BOCES has strong programming in the areas of education for the handicapped and vocational education. It is not strongly oriented toward academic programming.

"If there had been hiring proposed for the specific purpose of administrating the program, it might have had a better chance for success at BOCES, and acceptance of the idea by those working on the project," Dr. Merrins said. "As it was, it would have become an additional administrative responsibility for someone who already had a full work load. I felt that the Regional High School of Excellence probably would not have received the attention it deserved and needed in order to succeed."

Those who favored having the program run through BOCES did so for several reasons. It was considered a "neutral" site, and was something to which local school districts were

already contributing. "We pay good money for the BOCES buildings, and BOCES always seems to get the reputation that it gets the kids who are having problems going there, and it's not," said Brocton Superintendent Richard Gloss. "I would like to see that image changed somewhat. I don't like the idea that I figured I was going to be paying tuition to another school district within two miles of a building I already owned. We've got BOCES there, let's use it," he said.

Echoing this sentiment was Sam Danton, retired Cassadaga superintendent: "I thought it should have gone with BOCES, and maybe it would have had a chance for financial survival." Richard Casadonte, Mayville superintendent, suggested that funding on a per student basis, similar to the handicapped aid formula, might have been arranged.

The RFP originally sent to all district superintendents in the state clearly indicated that either school districts or BOCES could be the Lead Educational Agencies for the School of Excellence study projects. Dr. Merrins said that he contacted Mr. Calvin Peterson, who was BOCES superintendent at that time, and asked him if BOCES was interested in doing anything. According to Dr. Merrins, Mr. Peterson replied that none of the area superintendents had contacted him about the project, so he wasn't interested in pursuing it.

Richard Miga, assistant superintendent at BOCES, said, "Initially Jim asked our past superintendent Cal Peterson if there was some interest, and for some reason Peterson didn't seem to create too much of an impression that there was an interest. This frustrated me, because I think if services like this are going to be started or if anything like this is done on a regional basis, we have a good vehicle to put those services in place.

"Knowing the history of state funding, I also knew that it's unlikely that the state would continue funding forever for a project," continued Mr. Miga. "The only model I thought might be applied in this case in terms of the funding might have been similar to what is done with the handicapped children, where they have an excess cost formula. In some cases, the handicapped child and the gifted child are grouped in the same category - exceptional children. It's educating the exceptional child, and they can be exceptional on both ends of the spectrum," he said.

"The real reason (BOCES didn't run it) was no one was pushing for it from the BOCES level," said Skip Palmer, Director of Labor Relations at BOCES. "It takes someone who wants to get it done." Mr. Palmer also indicated that the implication that Fredonia was trying to supersede BOCES was unfair. "There was nobody at BOCES pushing for it," he said.

The issue of BOCES leadership continued to be raised for several months. Finally, Richard Miga was appointed to work with the Regional High School of Excellence program. "Miga was an excellent choice for the project," said Dr. Merrins. "It was felt that he wouldn't be concerned about whether BOCES had the program or didn't have the program, he just wanted to see a good program."

"We've all gone through planning processes, and Jim tried to do it right by involving the community and industry and so forth," said Mr. Miga. "You do get that spark going, but you can't rely so much on a funding source. My argument was, we've got to do something for them (gifted students), so let's make it work, regardless of the funding source. If the concept is that valuable, don't abandon it because the money's not there. If you really believe in it, then we're going to get the money from somewhere."

The Study Proposal

The Request for Proposal was a detailed description of how the project should be structured (see Appendix A). "I saw very quickly, because of the tight timeline, many organizations across the state were not going to be prepared to respond," Dr. Merrins said. "Therefore, we (Northern Chautauqua County) had a much better chance." Despite having only two weeks to prepare the proposal, Dr. Merrins said he decided to go ahead with it "because I firmly believe in the opportunity theory. Opportunity comes along . . . and if this is the time when an idea has a chance of succeeding, go for it!"

A total of 17 proposals were submitted to the New York State Education Department. Of these, 14 were funded. Twelve of the 14 projects had BOCES acting as the LEA. The Fredonia project and one other were the only projects in which independent school districts acted as LEA. The proposal submitted by Fredonia was ranked fourth in overall merit out of the 14, and a $40,000 planning grant was awarded to the Fredonia project late in the summer of 1985.

The proposal represents a tremendous amount of work, accomplished, out of necessity, within a very short time. Its preparation was a dual effort involving not only writing the proposal itself, but securing commitments from other school districts to participate. As can be seen, that process had its own set of obstacles. However, this did not prevent the production of a successful proposal.

STUDY PROPOSAL

NEW YORK STATE
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
AT FREDONIA

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of this project is to study the feasibility of the establishment of a New York Regional High School of Excellence in Fredonia, New York to serve a select student population from all the school districts in Northern Chautauqua County in a half-day (shared) program fostering high achievement in select disciplines.

PLANNING PROJECT DESCRIPTION (Narrative)

A. Planning Grant Advisory Committee Information (#4.A, p.4)

The Advisory Committee is composed of representatives from each of the seven school districts participating in the study. The committee has a current composition of eight board members, eight parents of potential enrollers, two students, three higher education professionals, three business and industry professionals, two teachers and four administrators. Due to the number of component districts in the study, it was not possible to have representatives from each background from each district; however, each district is represented by several committee members.

1. Formation of the Advisory Committee (#4.A.1, p.4)

The Advisory Committee was formed through the component school districts.

Identification of members:

a. Board members

Each school board was asked to appoint one interested board member to the Advisory Committee. It was felt that this would give the committee direct contact with the decision makers from each component district. (See page 35).

b. Parents

Component school boards were asked to identify one parent from their district that would serve on the Advisory Committee. They were asked to use four criteria in selecting parents of potential enrollers in a regional high school of excellence. (See Appendix C) The criteria were:

1) Parent of a child in grade 7, 8 or 9 who is gifted and/or clearly possesses outstanding academic talent.

2) Available on at least a monthly basis to attend Advisory Committee meetings.

3) Approachable about the concept of a regional high school.

4) Willing and able to work in a group decision-making structure.

c. Students

The students were identified through Superintendents in the participating district. Superintendents in the district were asked to identify students who had a potential for enrollment in the program, whose parents were not currently on the Advisory Committee, who were mature enough to handle committee membership and whose parents would allow them to attend Advisory Committee meetings.

d. Representatives of higher education

The representatives from higher education were identified and invited to serve on the Advisory Committee by a member of the Fredonia Central School District Board of Education. The representatives were selected because: they were not in education; did represent diverse disciplines (English and Science); and were recognized, informal leaders in the college community. The members are from SUNY College at Fredonia, the only four-year college located in and serving the northern Chautauqua County area.

e. Representatives from business and industry

The representatives from business and industry were identified and invited to serve on the Advisory Committee by the President of the Fredonia Central School District Board of Education. They were selected because: they are recognized formal and informal leaders in the northern Chautauqua County business community; they are community oriented individuals; and they have contacts in a broad range of businesses and industries in the area.

f. Teachers

The teachers were identified through Superintendents in the participating districts. Two Superintendents were asked to identify teachers in their districts who had an interest in working toward the development of a regional high school of excellence. Teachers were selected with a background and experience in identification and teaching of the gifted child.

g. Administrators

The administrators for the project are the Superintendent, Assistant to the Superintendent and High School Principal of the LEA, and the Secondary Principal from one of the participating districts.

2. Development of the Application by the Planning Grant Advisory Committee. (#4.A.2, p.4)

The planning grant application was written by the Superintendent of Schools of the LEA.

This grant application lacks detail due to the short timeline for submission of the application, the large number of districts being coordinated in this effort and the lack of professional support staff to aid in writing the application. The hiring of an educational planner, the submission of revisions to this application and time will correct these shortcomings.

The Advisory Committee, as a whole, met for two meetings to review and approve this school application. Prior to the first meeting all component district superintendents, school board presidents and identified members of the Advisory Committee were mailed copies of the invitation to make application, a letter of contact (See page 35) and a committee member designation form (See page 37).

At the first Advisory Committee meeting, on July 24, the scope of the project was reviewed in detail. In addition, a tentative budget was reviewed in detail and Advisory Committee members were asked to indicate participation on a subcommittee. (See: Page 39)

At the second Advisory Committee meeting, on August 8, the project application and project budget were approved. In addition, subcommittee assignments were made. The next meeting of the Advisory Committee was scheduled for Thursday, August 29, at 7:00 P.M. at Fredonia High School.

3. Advisory Committee Structure (#4.A.3, p.4)

A "line and staff" representation of the structure of the Advisor Committee has been developed (Diagram 1).

The Advisory Committee, as a whole, is the primary decision making body for the project.

All attempts will be made to reach decisions within the Advisory Committee by consensus; however, in matters of clear difference the matter will be resolved by vote. It is understood that decisions of the Advisory Committee are relative to this project and do not, in fact, represent commitments or binding decisions on the component school districts.

Due to its large size, the Advisory Committee has been subdivided into six subcommittees. The subcommittees, each comprised of four to ten members will carry out the intense study and planning activities of the project.

Administration of the project is being accomplished by the creation of an administrative structure that parallels the Advisory Committee. Line administration includes the Superintendent of Schools, Assistant to the Superintendent and High School Principal. Staff administration includes a full-time administrator and a titled Education Planner, who will coordinate the day-to-day activities of the project.

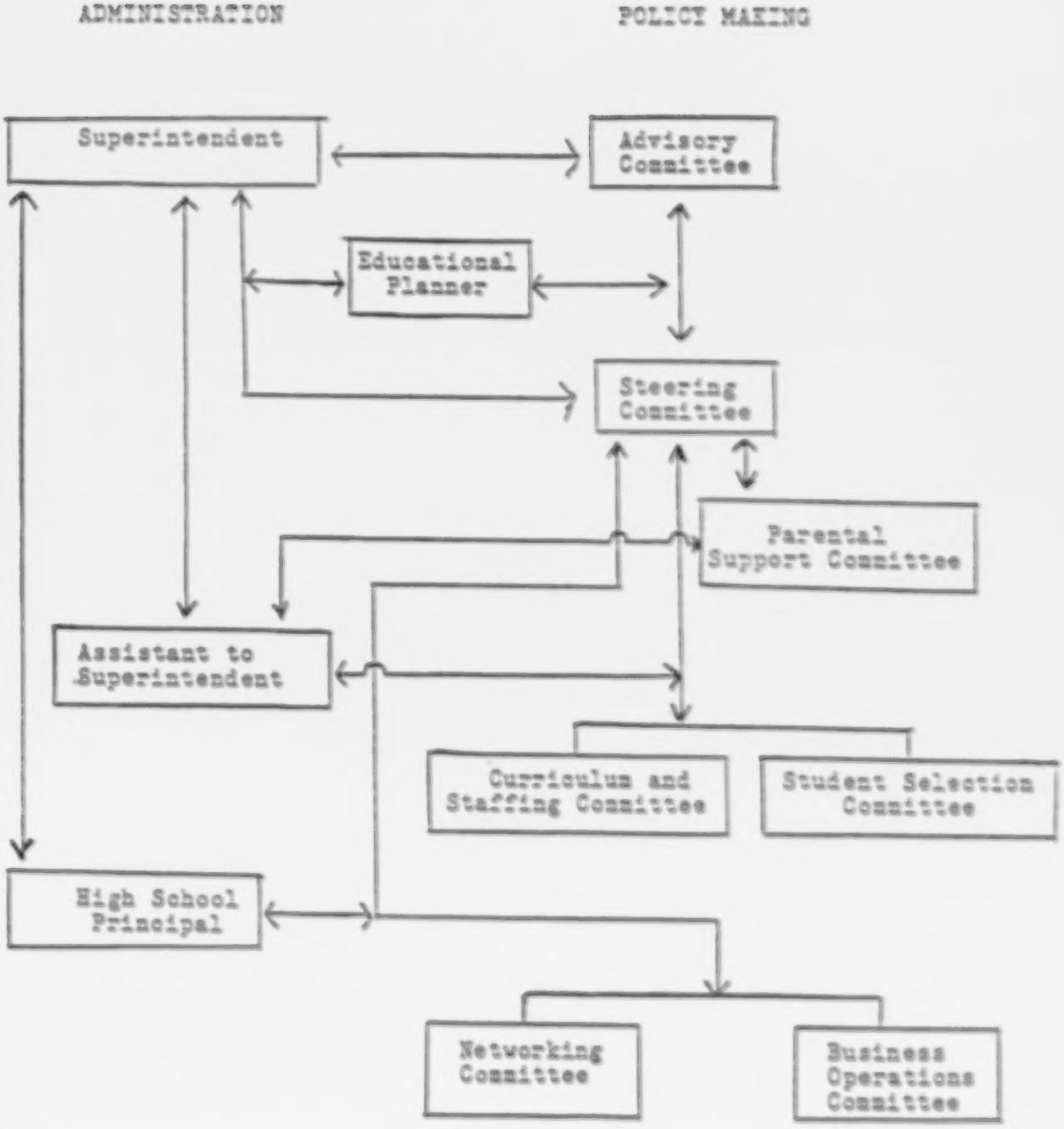
a. Roles and Responsibilities

1) Board Members

Board members will serve on the Advisory Committee and on the subcommittee(s) of their choice. They will serve as the primary communication link between the Advisory Committee and component school districts.

DIAGRAM 1

ADVISORY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE



2) Parents

Parents will serve on the Advisory Committee, the Parental Support subcommittee and on the subcommittee(s) of their choice. Parents will be program and student advocates. Parents will be asked to help foster parental support groups in their local school district if the component board decides to participate in the School of Excellence.

3) Students

Students will serve on the Advisory Committee and on the subcommittee(s) of their choice. They will serve as representatives of student participation in the program.

4) Representatives of higher education

Representatives of higher education will serve on the Advisory Committee, the Networking subcommittee and subcommittee(s) of their choice. The representatives will be asked to explore the possibility of support and shared services between the School of Excellence and the higher education institution and community.

5) Representatives of business and industry

Representatives of business and industry will serve on the Advisory Committee, the Networking subcommittee and subcommittee(s) of their choice. The representatives will be asked to explore the possibility of support and shared ventures between the School of Excellence and the business and industry community.

6) Teachers

Teachers will serve on the Advisory Committee and subcommittee(s) of their choice. They will serve as representatives of teacher parcipation in the program.

7) Administration

The Superintendent of Schools of the LEA will serve as Executive Director to the Advisory Committee and Steering subcommittee. He will have overall administrative responsibility for the project. He will coordinate all activities of the Educational Planner. He will serve as spokesperson for the project to the media. The Superintendent will attend all meetings of the Advisory Committee, Steering subcommittee and as many other subcommittees meetings as necessary to provide coordination and support of the project. He will control the project budget.

The Educational Planner will coordinate all the day-to-day activities of the project. He (she) will attend all Advisory Committee and subcommittee meetings. (See Appendix F)

The Assistant to the Superintendent of the LEA will serve as the activities administrator for the Curriculum and Staffing subcommittee, the Parental Support subcommittee and the Student Selection subcommittee. She will attend all meetings of Advisory Committee, Curriculum and Staffing subcommittee, Parental Support subcommittee, Student Selection subcommittee and she will attend all meetings of the Advisory Committee, Networking subcommittees and subcommittee meetings as necessary to provide effective oper-ation, interface and information exchange among subcommittees.

The High School Principal of the LEA will serve as the activities administrator for the Networking subcommittee and Business Operations subcommittee as many of the Business Operations subcommittee and as many other subcommittee meetings necessary to provide effective operation, interface and information exchange among subcommittees.

Administrators from non-LEA school districts will serve on the Advisory Committee and the subcommittee(s) of their choice. They will serve as representatives of administrative participation in the program.

b. Subcommittees

Due to the magnitude of the study, the need to coordinate any seven school districts, the size of the Advisory Committee and the different interests of committee members, an early decision was reached to use a subcommittee structure for accomplishment of the project activities. Advisory committee members were asked to indicate their preference for subcommittee membership. (See Appendix E) All persons were assigned to subcommittees of their choice; however, all parents were requested to be members of the Parental Support subcommittee (in addition to any other of their choice) and the representatives of higher education, business and industry were requested to be a part of the Networking subcommittee (in addition to any other of their choice).

Each subcommittee will elect its own chairperson from among its members.

All subcommittees will operate according to the Central Management Plan.

Responsibilities of the subcommittees are as follows:

1. Steering Committee

   This subcommittee has responsibility for overall coordination of the five other subcommittees. In addition, this committee handles all public relations aspects of the project such as providing speakers to community organizations, clearing press releases and developing position papers.

2. Parental Support Committee

   This subcommittee meets the requests of the project application. This committee will work to determine parent interest in and potential support of the School of Excellence. This committee will also serve as a contact and stimulus to parent interest of involvement at the local school district level.

3. Student Selection Committee

This subcommittee will work on determination of the student selection process for a School of Excellence. Members will research and make recommendations on areas such as entrance requests, selection procedures and class size.

4. Curriculum and Staffing Committee

This subcommittee will research and make recomendations on staffing, staff selection procedures, staff orientation and staff inservice programs, program development (discipline, curriculum, scope and sequence and interface with the home curriculum).

5. Networking Committee

This subcomittee will research and make recommendations on private sector (business and industry and other element) involvement in creation and completion of the School of Excelence. It will also develop a role for the college community in the creation and implementation of the program.

6. Business Operations Committee

This subcommittee will research and make recommendations in all areas of the physical operation of a School of Excellence. This includes the area of facilities, finance and transportation.

B. Identification of Community and Parent Interest (#4.B,p.5)

The identification of community and parent interest will be assessed through a variety of activities.

General community and parental interest will be stimulated through press releases in the local newspapers, press releases through component school district newsletters, talks before community groups and organizations, programs on the local cable T.V. station and appearances on local radio programs. Coordination of these activities will be through the Executive Director of the project.

Support from and by parents of potential enrollees will be through activities of identification and communication with the target parent population. Members of the Parental Support Subcommittee will be utilized in communication with PTA and other parental groups to increase parent awareness of the program. A master list of interested parents will be generated. Specific informational meetings for the parents of potential enrollees will be held in local school districts at the end of the school year.

If sufficient parental interest exists and component school districts are interested in the implantation of the proposed program, a parent networking organization will be fostered.

C. Research Activities (#4.C, p.5)

1. The research and examination of the areas, issues and problems of development of a School of Excellence will be a major focus (of the first phase) of the study project. The actual identification of areas for research and the procedures to be used will be determined by the appropriate subcommittees. The use of literature search, identification and communication with educational specialists and site visitations (when appropriate) will be used in research activities.

2. The School of Excellence will fill an important role in the education of those truly gifted and/or talented students in northern Chautauqua County school districts who heretofore have not had an opportunity to receive a specialized, intense program due to the scarcity of resources, small school and/or an inability to address the problem. It is hoped that our program will be a model for other sparcely populated areas of the states.

   The Regional High School of Excellence is well suited for location in the northern Chautauqua County area. The program will be serving a rural student population over a large geographical area. The location of a SUNY college in the LEA-community will provide support to a School of Excellence. The School of Excellence will also supplement, at the high school level, the gifted student programs currently offered through the state-funded Summer Enrichment Program and BOCES operated enrichment programs.

3. The process to be used to identify the discipline area(s) to be given special emphasis are yet to be determined. The initial dialoge will seem to indicate that we are probably projecting a total School of Excellence student population of 40 to 50 students per grade level (150-200 among the component school district). It is easy to speculate upon the student interest in any discipline; however, the results of actual investigation and survey of this question will be necessary.

   It can be speculated that a foundation program (liberal arts) could be available to all students, with specialization (indivudulized curriculum) coming after sampling a variety of disciplines.

D. The Management Plan (#4.D)

1. Central Management Plan of the Advisory Committee

The Central Management Plan will be used by the Advisory Committee, subcommittees and administrators to meet the goals of the project.

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Timeline (Deadline)	Activity
August 30, 1985	1. Finalization of the membership of the Grant Planning Advisory Committee. 2. Assignment of all committee members to subcommittees. 3. Hiring of the Educational Planner.
September 13, 1985	1. Steering Committee visits to all component school boards and with the media to discuss the intent of the project.
September 20, 1985	1. Completion of all subcommittee meetings to define: a. Questions to be answered during the study. b. Information to be gathered. c. Activities of the subcommittee. d. Responsibility of the subcommittee members. e. A detailed timeline for subcommittee activities. f. The evaluation plans for subcommittee activities

g. Identification and scheduling of staff and outside specialist to aid the subcommittee in its area of study.

h. A detail of the resources to be used by the LEA to facilitate the project.

September 30, 1985	1. Approval of the subcommittee plans by the Steering Committee.
October 31, 1985	1. Completion of all initial research and activities by the subcommittees. 2. Preparation of the draft of the interim report by the subcommittees.
November 15, 1985	1. Review of the interim reports by the Advisory Committee. 2. Discussion of the interim report with the component districts Boards of Education.
December 1, 1985	1. Revision and combination of the drafts of the interim report into the final draft of the report. 2. Delivery of the interim report to the State Education Department.
February 1, 1986	1. Detailed plan of activities by the Steering Committee for development of a final plan to develop and implement a School of Excellence.

March 1, 1986	1. Detailed plan of activities by subcommittees for development of final plans for a School of Excellence in their area of responsibility.
May 1, 1986	1. Completion of all subcommittee activities associated with development and implementation of a School of Excellence. 2. Preparation of the draft of the final report by the subcommittees.
May 15, 1986	1. Review of the final report by the Advisory Committee. 2. Discussion of the final report with the component districts' Boards of Education.
June 15, 1986	1. Revision and combination of the drafts of the final report into the final draft of the final report. 2. Delivery of the final report to the State Education Department

2. Staffing and Specialist

Administration of the plan, as described previously, will be coordinated by the Superintendent of Schools of the LEA. A full-time educational planner will coordinate the day-to-day research, planning activities and writing for the Advisory Committee and subcommittees.

The educational planner, working within the planned activities of the subcommittee will, through literature, research and telephone inquiries, identify specialists and consultants to aid the subcommittees in their activities. Specialists, consultants and individuals experienced in the successful operations of

programs similar to the proposed program will be invited to visit with appropriate subcommittees on a paid consultant basis. In addition, successful programs throughout the eastern United States will be identified for review and possible visitation by members of the subcommittee.

3. Resources

The Fredonia Central School District, as LEA, will provide office and meeting facilities for the project committees and staff. In addition, the project budget includes staffing for a part-time secretary to handle correspondence and office services. The LEA will provide the necessary office equipment. The Chautauqua County BOCES interschool mail services will be used, where practical, for correspondence with component school districts and committee members.

E. Preliminary Ideas for the School of Excellence (#4.E, p.6)

As noted previously and in the Central Management Plan, the identification of the key questions to be answered and the procedures for determining the answers to those key questions will be determined by the various subcommittees. These activities will proceed upon award of the study grant and following the hiring of the Educational Planner. The following are some of the preliminary ideas of the Advisory Committee relative to the proposed School of Excellence:

1. Student Selection Process

Few ideas for the student selection process have yet emerged. It is felt that a review of the literature regarding the selection of students for gifted programs, as well as the selection process used in "magnet schools," will aid the identification of a student selection process.

2. Staff Selection

Staff selection will be a function of the curriculum. Due to the specialized nature of the School of Excellence, the teaching staff will probably be supported by other professionals, such as a school psychologist, guidance counselor, two or three curriculum specialists and a building administrator.

Due to the half-day nature of the program, the availability of teachers in a traditional high school in the same building and the location of a four-year college nearby should aid in the staffing of the School of Excellence.

The professional characteristics of the teaching staff will be a critical component, requiring additional study.

3. Program Development

The school population from which students will be drawn for the School of Excellence will be a critical factor in the decision as to which disciplines will be offered. It can be speculated that the offering of a single discipline would only be attractive to a very small number of students. Therefore, a "liberal arts" approach may be appropriate.

4. Parental Involvement

Parental involvement will be studied by the Parental Support subcommittee. It is anticipated that a parent organization will evolve. An idea to consider would may be the inclusion of parent representatives on the "Board of Education" of the School of Excellence.

5. Private Sector

Business, industry and other elements of the private sector will play a critical role in the development of the School of Excellence. The primary communication during the development phase will be through the Northern Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce, whose Executive Director is a member of the Advisory Committee. It is planned that business and industry will provide educational opportunities to students in the School of Excellence through a mentor program and placement of students in their companies for educational studies.

6. Higher Education

Higher education will play a critical role in the development of the School of Excellence. It is planned to use the SUNY College at Fredonia as a source of teaching staff for the School of Excellence, a placement site for some students in some disciplines and a source of mentors for some students.

7. Facilities

The Business Operations subcommittees will investigate several options for facilities. Particular attention will be given to the possible use of the Fredonia High School due to the following:

a. Central location to the component school districts
b. Location in a business and industrial center
c. Available classroom space
d. Available specialty classrooms such as science labs and art rooms
e. Facilities that are construscted in compliance with all building and fire codes
f. Low cost of rental
g. "Least restrictive environment"
h. Full regular bus service between the Fredonia High School and the SUNY College at Fredonia and throughout the community

8. Governance

It is anticipated that the administrative structure of the School of Excellence will parallel that found in a small school district with a Board of Education and Superintendent/Principal.

9. Finances

This is a critical area of concern due to the anticipated high cost to the component school districts using the program. It is anticipated that a request for excess cost aid, "BOCES Aid" and/or supplemental aid will be necessary to make the School of Excellence a feasible program for school districts.

10. Transportation

Existing transportation will be used to the greatest extent possible.

The Advisory Committee feels that it is unreasonable to expect any of the students attending the School of Excellence to spend more than 45 minutes on a bus each way. Due to the sparce student population involved and the purpose of a School of Excellence, the loss of more than 1 1/2 hours from a student's day seems impractical and a waste.

The Advisory Committee would seek special funding to provide transportation aid during the first year of program operation.

F. Evaluation of the Initial Program (#4.F, p.7)

Ongoing evaluations of the developmental and implementation stage of the project will be the responsiblity of the Steering Committee under the coordination of the Executive Director and Educational Planner. A detailed plan of evaluation with objectives and a timeline will be developed by the Educational Planner following his hiring.

FREDONIA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

JAMES M. MERRINS
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

July 15, 1985

Dear

As discussed in our telephone conversation, the Fredonia Central School District Board of Education is making application for a New York State planning grant for the development of a Regional High School of Excellence to serve Northern Chautauqua County and to be located in our District. This "shared school" would offer an intensive, specialized educational program in selected disciplines to superior students. As a President of a Board of Education in our geographical area, I am requesting that your Board join us in our one-year, full-funded study.

If your Board agrees to participate, the Fredonia Central School District will act as Lead Education Agency, LEA, in this endeavor. To aid us in our study, we plan to use part of the funds to hire a full-time, paid researcher to coordinate, conduct and report the results of the study.

Time is of the essence. The grant application is due in Albany postmarked no later than Friday, August 9, 1985. If your Board of Education would like to join our effort, we will need a Letter of Agreement [See: p.3-2]* signed by your Superintendent (independent district) or District Superintendent (dependent district) by August 8, 1985. In addition, we will need the name, address and title of one School Board member and one parent willing to serve on our Planning Grant Advisory Committee [See: p.4-4.A.(1)] during the 1985-86 school year. The name of your Board representative and parent should be returned on the enclosed form.

In order to proceed with the timely completion of the application, the Planning Grant Advisory Committee will be meeting on Wednesday, July 24, Monday, August 5 and, if necessary, Tuesday, August 6 to discuss and complete the preliminary application for the grant. We ask that your Board representative and parent be advised of these meetings and plan to be in attendance.

It is understood that this study is a one-year planning effort and does not carry a commitment to continue planning or action in the following year.

I, other Fredonia Board members and James M. Merrins, our Superintendent, are available to meet with you and/or your Board any time prior to August 7 to discuss this matter in detail.

I await your response. Please feel free to contact me at home (679-1020) or Dr. Merrins at his office (679-1581) if we can offer any further support. We look forward to your joining us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Marilyn S. Maytum
President, Board of Education

Enclosure (2)
cc: Superintendent of School

* Note: Page reference is to the SED memo "Regional High Schools of Excellence Planning Grants," June 27, 1985.

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
July, 1985
Planning Grant Advisory Committee

Name of School District: _____

Name of Superintendent: _____

School Address: _____

_____

School Telephone:(____)_____

BOARD OF EDUCATION'S REPRESENTATIVE

Name: _____

Address: _____Telephone: Home: (____)_____

_____ Work: (____)_____

PARENT REPRESENTATIVE

Criteria for Selection: The parent representative to the Planning Grant Advisory Committee should be selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Parent of a child in grade 7, 8 or 9 who is gifted and/or clearly possesses outstanding academic talent.
2. Available on at least a monthly basis to attend Planning Grant Committee meetings.
3. Approachable about the concept of a regional high school.
4. Willing and able to work in a group decision-making structure.

Name: _____

Address: _____Telephone: Home: (____)_____

_____ Work: (____)_____

Please return to: Dr. James M. Merrins
Fredonia Central Shcool District
East Main Street
Fredonia, NY 14063

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
AT FREDONIA

Subcommittees

Steering (Coordination and Public Relations)

Student Selection

Curriculum and Staffing

Parental Support

Networking (Business, Industry and Higher Education)

Business Operations (Facilities, Budget and Transportation)

****

Name: _____

School District: _____

Check one:

☐ I am willing to serve on <u>one</u> subcommittee

☐ I am willing to serve on <u>two</u> subcommittees

☐ I am not available to serve on a subcommittee; however I will continue to serve on the Advisory Committee.

I am interested in serving on the following committees:

1st choice: _____

2nd choice: _____

3rd choice: _____

☐ Please appoint me where my background and skills would be of greatest value.

Educational Planner

One of the first steps in getting the project under way was hiring an educational planner, who would coordinate the day-to-day activities of the project. Mrs. Judith Deiulio became involved with the project when she was the successful applicant for the position of educational planner. Mrs. Deiulio had an extensive background in gifted and talented education, and was a recognized leader in gifted education efforts throughout Chautauqua County. Her experience was an asset to the committees. "She really knew the literature and a lot of the key people," Dr. Merrins said.

Mrs. Deiulio said the project was "heavily front-loaded," since the interim (progress) report was due in December - only three months after the state accepted the proposal and work began. "My job was more than full-time," she said. "I came in at 7:30 a.m., worked until 5:00 p.m., then came back for meetings in the evening - sometimes two meetings a night."

She was also responsible for writing press releases about the project, along with position statements and records of all the committee meetings. "If the committees directed something to get done, I would do it," she said. For example, Mrs. Deiulio set up telephone conference calls with administrators, teachers and parents involved with gifted schools because the project did not have enough funding to send committee members to visit such schools.

Mrs. Deiulio said she read anything she came upon that had to do with gifted education, and shared the information with the committees. The committees progressed nicely, she said. "It was amazing that you could get people from such diverse backgrounds together and get so much accomplished," she said.

Public Relations Strategy

The public relations efforts for the School of Excellence project were based on the concept that "talking about something enough makes it a reality," said Dr. Merrins. "Something happens because people believe it is going to happen, and their beliefs are then reinforced by what they hear, and read in the newspaper."

The intent of the public relations program was to present the public with such complete information on the project that their thinking about it would shift from perceiving it as an abstract concept to acceptance of it as a real program. Dr. Merrins felt that public awareness would generate support from parents of all gifted students, even in

districts not participating in the project. If parents began asking why they weren't being offered programming for these very bright students, it might cause the districts to rethink their positions regarding programs for gifted students.

When the project first began, press releases were provided, on at least a weekly basis. Often there were two within a week's time. The releases covered all aspects of the project, including explaining the time frame for implementation, funding, a definition of the student population to be served and advantages for the local economy. [Copies of the press releases for the project may be obtained by contacting the Fredonia Central School District. See order form in the back of this manual.]

Selling the program to the public was, according to Dr. Merrins, a difficult task. "One of the responses of the public was, 'Why should we do anything for these students when they are going to make it anyway?'," he said. "Research shows that this is not true. These students are not always going to be successful, and 'make it on their own' without the benefit of special educational opportunities.

"The perception of some of the public tends to be 'Why are you going to do something for them (gifted students)? How about doing something for my kid? Why should we give something to these kids who already have a 'gift?' It's like giving a Cadillac to a rich kid; he doesn't need one!"

Part of the public reaction may have been rooted in a fear of increased taxes, for which the majority felt they would receive no direct benefit, but would be supporting a "select few."

The public relations effort was a thorough attempt to present complete information on the Regional High School of Excellence project to the public. It was then up to the individual to make a decision on whether to support or oppose the concept. There were those who opposed the Regional High School of Excellence concept, those who observed but remained neutral, and others who fully supported it.

"Along with parents of gifted students," Dr. Merrins said, "those who supported the program included most business leaders, professional people (doctors, lawyers, etc.), middle management, and independent business owners. They saw it as a benefit. If you can capture the energy of the gifted student, and use it, it can be a great resource for the community as well as all of society."

The public relations effort did not confine itself to press releases. Related parts of this effort included a series of public information meetings. These meetings were held during the first semester of the project. One meeting

was scheduled in each of the school districts participating in the study project. A box ad was run in several local newspapers to call attention to the meetings. Dr. Merrins gave a prepared presentation at each of these meetings. This included an overview of the project, and an interpretation of the definition of "Schools of Excellence" as stated in the Request for Proposal:

> Schools of Excellence can be described as regional high schools which offer intensive, specialized programs to a selected number of students to foster high achievement in selected disciplines. The program and curriculum of such a school would focus on, or give emphasis to, selected subject areas such as mathematics, science, technology or the arts. These programs would involve students in a challenging curriculum and be characterized by innovative teaching strategies, a wide variety of learning resources, including interaction with and involvement of parents, the private sector, and higher education. The proposed program must be of a unique character not already available at this time in the participating school districts.

Additional information presented at these meetings included the composition and role of the committee structure of the project, a description of the student population, and a description of the proposed curriculum. Also, those in attendance at the meeting participated in an activity designed to clear up misconceptions about gifted and talented students. Participants were given the following information, and asked to indicate whether they thought each statement was true or false (see Appendices B1 and B2 for an answer sheet, and supporting references verifying this information):

SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR BRIGHT STUDENTS WILL CREATE AN ELITIST GROUP

TRULY BRIGHT STUDENTS CAN SUCCEED ON THEIR OWN

10-15% OF ALL BRIGHT STUDENTS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL PRIOR TO GRADUATION

WE "TAKE CARE OF" BRIGHT STUDENTS IN OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS

BRIGHT STUDENTS THINK DIFFERENTLY THAN AVERAGE STUDENTS

IT'S NOT FAIR TO DIRECT SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO ONE GROUP. ALL CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE THE SAME PROGRAM

A STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 135 IS AS DIFFERENT FROM THE STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 100 AS IS A STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 65

BRIGHT STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL IN HONORS COURSES

A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR BRIGHT STUDENTS WILL TAKE ALL OUR STUDENT LEADERS OUT OF OUR SCHOOL

WE ALL KNOW WHO THE BRIGHTEST STUDENTS ARE

The public meetings were generally well attended (see Appendix B3 for attendance figures.) When asked whether they tended to create more support for the concept, or generate more controversy, Dr. Merrins said, "They did both. It depended on who was in attendance, and how strong their feelings about the concept were. In most cases it strengthened the support."

The meetings were seen as a necessary part of the total public relations effort, and were a valuable forum for the direct exchange of information. Margaret Van Haneghan, former Assistant to the Superintendent at Fredonia, felt that the meetings were very helpful. "People had really limited knowledge about the program," she said. Their concerns included transportation to the school, the number of students that would be accepted to the school, and how they would be selected. "We didn't have the answers to all their questions," she said, but most people seemed to support the program once they learned more about it. "I think the meetings really helped allay some of those worries."

The meetings were one good way, in addition to the newspapers, to keep the information on the project as public as possible, and help build community support.

A third public relations effort was the mailing of a community interest survey to all Fredonia Central School District residents. The survey provided information on the School of Excellence project, and also asked respondents to reply if they had an interest in the concept. Approximately 5500 surveys were sent out. Fifty-two were returned. The majority of respondents indicated that they had a child, or children, who they felt would benefit from attendance at a Regional High School of Excellence.

Though only a small percentage of the surveys were returned, this was an important first step in identifying a potential student population for the School of Excellence. Because the school would be serving a relatively small number of students (approximately 20 per grade level), this was an early indication that there would actually be a large enough student population with School of Excellence potential from which to draw. Again, this particular survey was mailed only to Fredonia district residents. (See Appendix B4, Community Interest Survey.)

Additional components of the total public relations program were: presentations at Board of Education meetings in the participating districts, presentations at faculty meetings in the local high schools, media presentations on local radio and cable television programs, and presentations to community organizations such as Rotary and Phi Beta Kappa. In all, approximately 20 public presentations

were made in a three-month period.

Summary

Initiation of the Regional High School of Excellence study project, due to its size and complexity, was a challenging task. It required attention to a great many details. There were also unanticipated issues that needed to be addressed, not always to everyone's satisfaction. However, the basic project concept and structure was strong enough to withstand the opposition expressed by some, and work commenced.

The educational planner, Mrs. Judith Deiulio, was hired as early as possible to coordinate the project activities. Mrs. Deiulio played a key role in helping to maintain the momentum of the project. She contributed immeasureable assistance and guidance to each working committee as they set out to accomplish the tasks assigned to them.

The importance of keeping the public informed as to the nature and activities of the project was recognized from the start. Public relations efforts during the early, most intense part of the study involved the use of several forums to keep the public informed. Press releases on a regular basis, radio spots on the local station, a half-hour taped informative program on the local cable TV station, a survey mailed out to all Fredonia community residents, and a series of public information meetings were all undertaken throughout the course of the first semester of the project (Fall, 1985). Public relations throughout the remainder of the project consisted of periodic press releases to keep the public informed on project progress and activities, and presentations to local community groups.

CHAPTER 3 PROJECT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The working committee structure of the School of Excellence project was designed to maintain a working inter-relationship between the committees. The Advisory Committee formed the central pool for the project's working committees. Represented on the Advisory Committee were district boards of education, higher education, non-public schools, business and industry, teachers, parents, students and administrators. The Advisory Committee as a whole formed the primary decision-making body for the study project.

The Advisory Committee was organized into six working committees. Chapters four through eight cover the work of five of these committees: Business Operations, Curriculum and Staffing, Student Selection, Parental Support, and Networking. An administrator from the Fredonia Central School District served on each of these committees and provided coordination and support for the work of the committee.

The sixth committee was the Steering Committee. This committee coordinated the study and work of the other five committees during the first year of the study project. Members of the Steering Committee included: Mrs. Alice Harford, Silver Creek Board of Education member; Mr. Erik Kibelsbeck, Silver Creek Central School student; Mr. Larry McGuinn, parent, Westfield; Mrs. Marilyn Maytum, Fredonia Board of Education president; Dr. James Merrins, Fredonia Central School District Superintendent; and Miss Irene Talarico, Fredonia Board of Education member.

Along with its coordination duties, the Steering Committee took responsibility for public relations aspects of the project: clearing press releases, providing speakers to community organizations and determining public relations goals during the various phases of the project. The Steering Committee also made recommendations on the governance structure for the School of Excellence.

In the second year of the study project, the Fredonia Board of Education passed a resolution which created a Board of Governance to manage the Regional High School of Excellence. The Board of Governance became the project's main decision making body until the time when planning for the School of Excellence was suspended due to discontinuation of state funding. Upon creation of the board, the Steering Committee was dissolved.

The ten-member Board of Governance had representatives from each of the five districts participating in the second year of the study, and also included a teacher, parent and

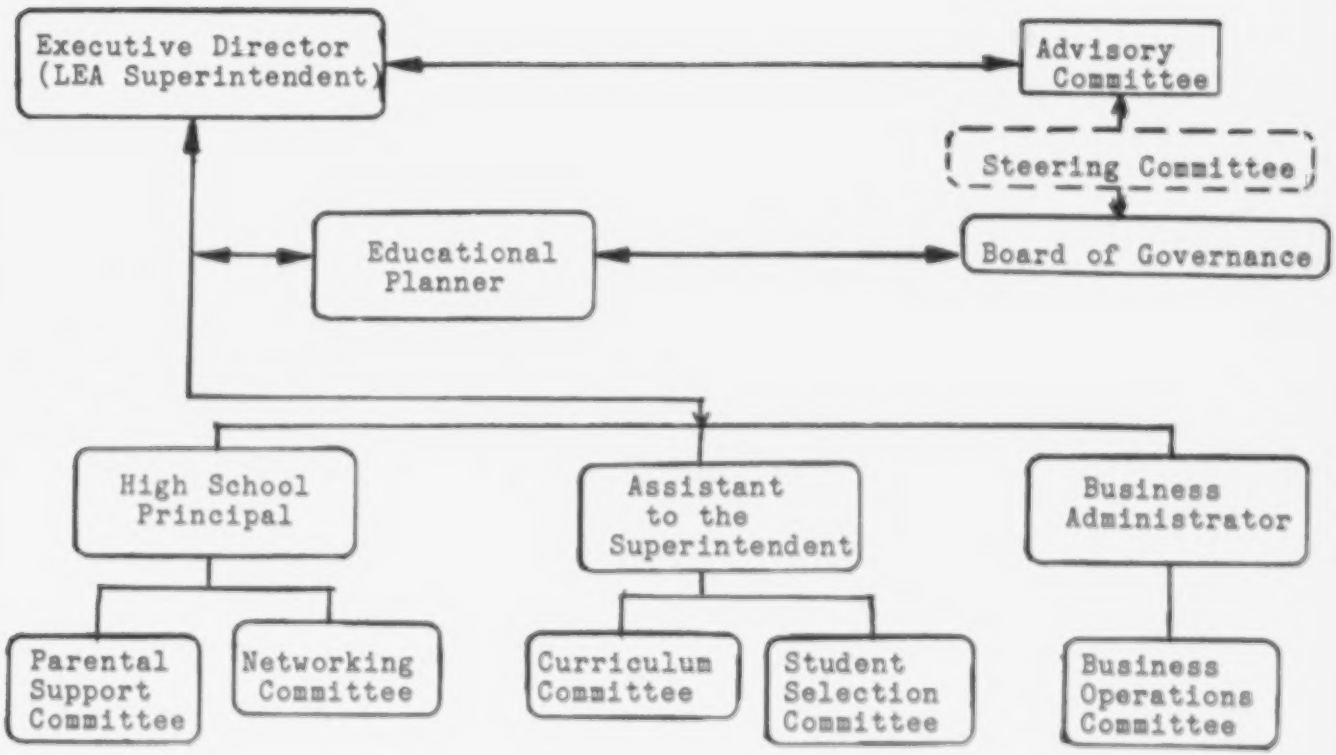
student, along with a representative of higher education and the business community. The Board of Governance met on a monthly basis and operated in the same manner as a public school board of education, with the exception that its members were appointed, not elected. All meetings of the Board of Governance were also attended by the project's executive director and educational planner.

The role of the educational planner was to coordinate the day-to-day activities of the project. The educational planner also served on all working committees in order to maintain communication between the committees, and provide information on the progress and direction of work on the overall project. Mrs. Judith Deiulio held this position during the first year of the study project. When she moved from the area, she was replaced by Dr. Mary Kay Urbanik for the second year of the project.

The five board members representing the participating districts were appointed by the boards of education of the local districts. Each of these members served on their district's own board of education, and were the communication link between their district and the Regional High School of Excellence. Other individual members of the Board of Governance were appointed at the recommendation of the Fredonia Teachers' Association, the Fredonia High School principal, the president of SUNY College at Fredonia and the Northern Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce.

Board of Governance members were: Mr. Farris El Nassar, student; Mr. James Green, Westfield Board of Education member; Ms. Joan Hites, business and industry representative; Mr. Douglas LeBarron, Forestville Board of Education member; Mr. Ronald Lucas, Pine Valley Board of Education member; Mr. Charles McMillen, Ripley Board of Education member; Ms. Grace Perez de la Garza, parent; Dr. A. Cutler Silliman, Fredonia Board of Education member; Mr. John Siskar, teacher; and Dr. Steve Warner, higher education representative.

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
WORKING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE



CHAPTER 4 BUSINESS OPERATIONS

The Business Operations Committee was responsible for researching and making recommendations in all areas of the physical operation of the School of Excellence. Areas identified for study were transportation, facilities and finance. The committee consisted of the Superintendent and the Business Administrator for the LEA, Dr. James Merrins and Mr. Carter Town, respectively, and the project's Educational Planner, Mrs. Judith Deiulio. Mr. Richard Miga, Assistant Superintendent at BOCES, was also appointed to serve on this committee as liaison for BOCES.

One of the committee's first activities was to develop key questions that needed to be answered within each area of study. This included information concerning:

a. Average travel time of students who ride the bus to the district high school.

b. Travel time from the district high school to Fredonia High School.

c. Starting time of the high school in each participating district.

d. Current district local share to educate each child (1985-86 figures.)

A form requesting the necessary information was mailed to all participating school districts. Based on data collected for items 'a', 'b', and 'c' from the list above, a decision was made that the School of Excellence program would run from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. each day.

All data collected for the items listed above is shown in the tables that appear on the next two pages.

	Brocton	Forestville	Fredonia	Pine Valley	Ripley	Silver Creek	Westfield
Size of district, in square miles	40	150	50	125	-	35	-
Estimated average high school student travel time, home to high school	20	35	28	30	25	17	20-25
Longest high school bus run, in minutes	40	80	44	45	50	35	75
Longest high school bus run, in miles	27.5	25	32.5	37	18	11.15	27
Driving distance, high school to Fredonia, in miles	7	8	NA	16	25	11	16
Estimated travel time, high school to Fredonia	20	20	NA	30	50	16	25
1985-86 estimated local cost per student	-	$1562	$1987	$2074.70	$420	(84-85) $1612.26	-
Selected operating aid per Pupil Unit	$1997.75	$1680.55	$1369.45	$2064.85	$1749	$1778.15	$1497.55

DISTRICT	START	END	LUNCH	BAND	CHORUS
Ripley	8:00	1:59	10:57 - 12:33	11:30-12:33 (M-W-F)	11:30-12:33 (T-TH)
Silver Creek	8:02	2:44	11:06 - 1:12	12:24-1:12	12:24-1:12
Forestville	8:05	2:35	11:06 - 11:47	8:05-8:46	8:05-8:46
Brocton	8:09	2:30	11:01 - 12:21	1:50-2:30	1:50-2:30
Fredonia	8:11	2:15	11:15 - 1:29	11:15-11:57 12:01-12:43	11:15-11:57 12:47-1:29
Westfield	8:15	2:45	11:15 - 11:45 (7-8-9) 12:45 - 1:15 (10-11-12)	10:30-11:15 (M-W-F)	10:30-11:15 (T-TH)
Pine Valley	8:30	2:59	11:27 - 12:02	12:02-12:44	12:02-12:44

Other study questions, and their accompanying suggested activities researched by the committee were:

1. Transportation

   How can transportation best be provided?

   Activity - Based on data collected, set up a transportation system which provides a maximum of 45 minutes travel time from the student's residence to the High School of Excellence.

2. Facility

   Where should the facility be located?

   Activity - Study various locations that would present a suitable educational environment, allow adequate room for bus loading, provide laboratory facilities, an adequate number of classrooms, etc.

3. Finance

   A. What are the reasonable estimates of costs for the facility, staff, transportation, curriculum development, materials, cleaning, in-service, evaluation, field trips, and benefits?

      Activity - Study and set up a budget considering a five-year phase in, and the use of other data to be determined by the other committees regarding:

      1) Length of the school day.

      2) Estimated number of students.

      3) Pupil/teacher ratio.

      4) Other factors as needed.

   B. What is a reasonable estimate of cost per pupil?

      Activity - Determine the gross cost per pupil based upon a projected program budget.

   C. How will the costs of the school be financed?

      Activity -
      1) Study the extent of state support necessary to

allow district schools to participate in the program.

2) Survey the participating school boards to ascertain at what level they would support a Regional High School of Excellence.

Transportation

"Our committee spent most of its time working on a transportation system for the School of Excellence," said Carter Town, Fredonia Central School Business Administrator. "The problem was getting the students here in a reasonable period of time, what with the diversity and distances between the school districts that were looking at participating in the School of Excellence."

When studying the transportation problem, the committee devised five possible options to consider. These options were developed and analyzed in discussions with committee members, boards of education, superintendents, community members, and business managers. The options were:

Option 1: Use of existing bus systems, local district pickup and delivery to the School of Excellence using local district bus routes and the BOCES bus run.

Option 2: School of Excellence door to door pickup and delivery of students. School of Excellence buses will pick up students at home and deliver them directly to the School of Excellence.

Option 3: Local district pickup and delivery to the local High School and School of Excellence, pick up and delivery to the High School of Excellence, use of the local district and the School of Excellence transportation systems.

Option 4: Use of a "maximum time on the bus" system, use of existing local District transportation for students in districts close to the School of Excellence (Option 1) and direct delivery by the School of Excellence for students living a greater distance (Option 2).

Option 5: Other--Private school approach--students provide own transportation.

As the options were discussed among the superintendents and committee members, several major concerns emerged. One of these was the length of travel time on the bus from the student's home to the School of Excellence. This became a key factor in the formulation of a transportation system. It was felt that one-way travel time on the bus should not exceed 45 minutes.

Another major concern was that of cost of the transportation system. Committee members felt that the transportation system should not have the heavy start-up costs of plant, parts inventory, equipment and a bus fleet. Therefore, it was recommended that student transportation for the School of Excellence be contracted with an outside carrier to avoid high cost start-up expense. They also felt that the transportation costs should not be tied to the current transportation aid formula.

The options were evaluated on an individual basis by each member of the Business Operations Committee, and the Steering Committee. Each committee member ranked the options, and then the joint committees collectively evaluated the top ranking options. Option 4, use of a "maximum time on the bus" system, was selected as the best option.

"Basically, what it amounted to was that most of the options wouldn't work," said Mr. Town. "There were just so many variables in there, it was mind boggling. We spent a lot of time on that (sorting out the variables). It took a lot of planning, it took a lot of coordination, it took a lot of meetings between the districts to decide the best way it should be handled," he said.

The other options were not chosen for a variety of reasons. Under Option 1, students would have had to spend too much time on the bus, and scheduling would have been a problem. For example, the BOCES half-day is very short (two and one quarter hours), whereas the School of Excellence half-day was scheduled to run for a three and one half hour period of time. Option 2 would have involved the purchase of new buses for the School of Excellence, and might have been hard to "sell" to the taxpayer. Use of Option 3 would have involved changing existing bus routes, which could have presented major logistical problems. Option 5 could not be considered because New York state law requires that students be provided transportation to and from school.

Due to the distances between the school districts participating in the School of Excellence study project, it was felt that use of each district's own individual transportation system to carry students to the Regional High School of Excellence was not feasible. Some students might have had to spend 90 minutes or more on a bus, one way.

This, in addition to the fact that contract busing is 90 percent aidable, served to reinforce the choice to go with contract busing, using mini-vans. No new vehicles would have to be purchased. The number of mini-vans required would have been dependent upon the transportation schedules developed.

"We figured that we would have needed between four and six mini-vans, depending on the location of the students, the time factors, the number of pick-ups and the other variables," said Mr. Town. "We would contract them through a carrier, go out and bid it and do it that way. If the state had funded the School of Excellence and approved our plan of transportation, then it's an appropriate expenditure and therefore aidable at 90 percent. I don't think that would have been terribly expensive," he said.

In working out the details of the transportation system, the following considerations were also noted:

1) The morning bus run was the only one the School of Excellence need be concerned about, since students would be picked up by their own district's bus, which also stopped at BOCES (located 2.9 miles from the Fredonia High School) to pick up vocational education students for the return trip to their local high school.

2) With contract busing, routes covering more than one school district could have picked up students who lived near each other geographically. This would have been a flexible system, and students could have transferred from one bus to another as needed.

3) The mini-vans could start their pick-ups at different times to assure students' arrival at the School of Excellence by 8:00 A.M.

4) Actual routes for the mini-vans, along with projected costs, could not be planned until the actual students were identified, and their residence charted on a regional map. Under contract busing, the routes may have covered several school districts to pick up students who lived near each other geographically.

5) The mini-vans used to transport students to the School of Excellence also could have been used during the school day to transport participating students to various sites (for educational purposes) throughout the morning.

6) A standard of "maximum student time" on a bus was set at 45 minutes. Students who lived furthest from the School of Excellence would have been picked up at their homes by a mini-van. Students living in districts with close geographic proximity to the School of Excellence would

have ridden a home district bus to their local high school, and then transferred to a School of Excellence mini-van. The mini-vans could have been housed in different districts overnight to facilitate the morning bus runs.

7) The coordination of the morning transportation schedule would have been the responsibility of the School of Excellence administration working with the local school districts.

Facility

When searching for a facility in which to house the School of Excellence, areas of consideration were: location, security, the number and size of classrooms needed, administration and lab facilities. As with the transportation system, the decision-making process regarding where to locate the School of Excellence started with the development and analysis of available options.

"We spent a lot of time on that," said Mr. Town. "We looked at having no campus and just going to the 'classroom', wherever it was located. We looked at having the facilities located at the college. We looked at having the facilities located at BOCES. We looked at having the facilities located here (at Fredonia High School). We looked at building on a site, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. Some of them were obvious and some of them weren't," he said. "It was not a foregone conclusion from the beginning that the school would be located at Fredonia. But as things developed, we began to see that Fredonia was relatively central to the districts intending to participate, and it seemed logical to locate it here."

"You are starting with a concept and building what you envision to be a program at some point in time. In order to do that, you have to start at some base, make some premise, develop some hypotheses and pursue them, and then build what you are going to end up with. We were looking at a concept and we were developing it, and that's just the way it ended up," he said.

Each facility option was evaluated and ranked by individual committee members, boards of education, superintendents, community members and business managers. The facility options developed were:

Option 1: Various locations throughout the community based upon the curriculum and educational needs.

Option 2: Chautauqua BOCES North Center.

Option 3: A high school site in northern Chautauqua County.

Option 4: The State University of New York College at Fredonia.

Option 5: A newly constructed independent facility in northern Chautauqua County.

Option 6: A purchased building in northern Chautauqua County.

Option 7: Other--Use the high school site (Option 3) in conjunction with the college, when appropriate.

A set of key factors became the basis for evaluating each option. These factors were weighted heavily towards the theme of health and safety. It was felt that the health and safety factors should not be compromised in selection of a facility.

The key factors were:

1) Central location

2) Safe environment

3) Cost

4) Adequate space

5) Psychologically safe

6) Least restrictive environment

7) Specialized classrooms (library, labs)

8) Availability of staff

Option 1, using various locations throughout the community, would have had a negative impact on the already difficult transportation problem, and would have been difficult to manage from an administrative point of view. The lack of a defined unit - a place where classes would meet consistently - was seen as a disadvantage, and it was also noted that some facilities might not meet fire or handicapped codes.

BOCES (Option 2) was given serious consideration as a possible site for the School of Excellence. Reasons for not

choosing this option were numerous. It was felt that administrative leadership needed for the School of Excellence program was not currently available, nor was the teaching staff needed for a shared program available. Other considerations were: BOCES did not provide the right kind of "atmosphere" for this type of school, and it was not a "least restrictive" environment. It was also felt that locating the School of Excellence at BOCES would lead the public to identify it as a BOCES program, which it was not. Finally, BOCES already was experiencing a lack of space for existing programs.

Option 4, use of the State University College of New York at Fredonia, was given serious consideration because of the interesting and extensive possibilities. It was vetoed, however, because of concern about placing younger students in a "college" atmosphere, and the ensuing separation from the high school environment. A related option, Option 7, which considered use of both high school and college sites when appropriate, was discarded due to transportation problems involved in such an approach.

Options 5 and 6, which involved either constructing or purchasing a building in northern Chautauqua County were not practical due to the cost, particularly for a half-day program. In commenting on this, Mr. Town stated, "When you explore options, you must look at cost. Obviously, your best solution would have been to build a new facility, obviously. Fresh ideas, new concepts, space - you can do all those things. Dollars and cents aside, it's probably the best solution. But it's hard to justify when you have an already existing facility that's going to generally meet the needs," he said.

The option finally selected as the best alternative was Option 3, a high school site in northern Chautauqua County. This option met the test of the key factors and concerns of the participating school districts.

Based upon the option selected, the Business Operations Committee then investigated the feasibility of using the facilities of the Fredonia Central School East Main Campus (LEA). A study was made of the Fredonia High School enrollment for the next 10 years. A declining enrollment was projected, which meant that the School of Excellence could be located within the East Main Campus complex.

This location satisfied all the key factors mentioned earlier. The School of Excellence could share laboratories, audio-visual and library facilities of the LEA. The School of Excellence could be housed in a separate, single area, with easy accessibility to these specialized facilities on an as-needed basis.

The need for specialized facilities outside of the school would have been available in local business and industry, and government and higher education facilities within the Dunkirk-Fredonia community (on an as-needed, as-available basis).

The space used for the School of Excellence within the Fredonia High School would have been leased, based upon the cost of utilities and maintenance on a per square foot basis. Initially, two classrooms in the LEA were to be set aside, with additional rooms utilized as the size of the program increased. Office space was made available starting with the 1986-87 school year.

Finance

Five financial options were developed for the School of Excellence. Different methods of financing the school had been discussed, including tuition, cost-aid and state aid. The identified options arose from intense discussions. Options initially developed and analyzed included:

Option 1: Total state funding of the School of Excellence.

Option 2: Total local school district funding (full tuition with state aid.)

Option 3: Local district share based on a "BOCES-like" state aid formula.

Option 4: Local district share based on a "BOCES-like" state aid formula plus a state aid incentive per pupil based on attendance.

Option 5: Local district share equal to the average local district per pupil expenditure, with the state paying the difference.

Funding plans for facilities development, program development and operation were studied as one total item of the financial structure under the question, "How will the cost of the School of Excellence be financed?"

Once again, options were evaluated and ranked. Because the School of Excellence was an unproven program, and an expensive one, it was felt that it would have been difficult to "sell" the concept of total local school district funding, (Option 1.) Option 3, use of a "BOCES like" state aid formula, was not favored due to the potential impact on local district aid because of the small number of students

involved. Options 4 and 5 were discarded because it was felt that they would perhaps not be regarded as "fair," because not all districts are considered equal with regard to percent of attendance and district per pupil expenditures.

In discussing the options which involved some degree of local financial commitment, Franklin Russell, Pine Valley Superintendent, felt that the participating school districts should help fund a program like this. "Dr. Merrins and I talked about this early in the game, that local districts should put some money up front," he said. "If more money was needed than the grants provided, then I think the districts should have been asked to contribute on some basis."

"Dr. Merrins put in this energy and his staff put in this energy to develop this program," Mr. Russell continued. Did he put in less energy for me because I've got fewer students? Or did he put in as much energy for me as he did for himself, and he's got four or five times as many kids as I do. I think he put in as much energy and as much sincerity to develop this program for the benefit of my kids as he did for his own, and on that basis, I think sometimes that we should pay as much as the other districts.

"However, I don't always feel that way about all financing," he said. "It costs as much time and energy to plan a trip for 10 kids as it does for 35. It's as easy to do 35 as it is 10. There were instances when I thought that the basis for funding should be those five school districts divided by five," said Mr. Russell.

The committee selected Option 1: total state funding of the School of Excellence. "After studying the various methods of financing, we came to the conclusion, and recommended that it be fully state-funded, including transportation," said Mr. Town. "Realistically, that would have been the proper approach, but the state normally doesn't do that. They feel that the school district has to contribute something. There has to be a 'district share.' It's probably tied to their ability to pay through the state formula. In other words, districts would pay their local share, whatever it is for each child. Then the balance of the tuition cost would be paid by the state," he said.

"Of course, if it's 100 percent funded by the state, then you get into the allocation questions: How many students are there? How do you evaluate them? How many come from each school? So if the state's going to fund it 100 percent, then you keep track of the costs, and it's reimbursed 100 percent. You can get into cash flow problems," said Mr. Town.

In commenting on the total state funding option, Mr Russell, Pine Valley Superintendent, said, "I felt from the

outset that local districts should be putting money into this to keep it healthy. If you're always at the mercy of grants, and when the only lifeblood is grants, when those grants go, the project goes. There was a tremendous amount of work and good thinking that went into this activity, and of and by its own merits it should still be there, even though it's a tremendously expensive program. It's too bad it didn't have more local commitment."

Certain conclusions were drawn based on the choice of the total state funding option. One was that the funding for the School of Excellence should not be part of the aid or financial structure of the LEA. Also, total state funding of the School of Excellence should in no way affect the operating aid of the participating school districts. Another conclusion drawn, and one which made its presence felt throughout the duration of the project, was that Option 1 could only be realized with the assurance of a long-term commitment to total funding by New York state. It was felt that the state of New York should make public assurances of its commitment to long-range financial support of the Regional High School of Excellence.

Proposed budgets for the School of Excellence were developed several times throughout the course of the study project. The budgets were continually modified, and developed on the assumption that there was to be full state funding for the program. (Copies of the full budgets are included in Appendix C.)

All work on the Regional High School of Excellence study project, including the drafting of proposed budgets for program development and implementation, was done on the assumption of full state funding for the program. "When we looked at it the first year, we developed our concept of what the high school of excellence should be and what would work in this county," said Mr. Town. "That's why we were awarded the grant. But, I felt that it was only going to succeed if what we proposed was what the governor wanted."

"I think there were a few things against us from the beginning. I think the governor was looking predominantly at an all-day program, probably in a metropolitan area that offered all of the resources. Northern Chautauqua County did not match the governor's vision.

"I think we could have provided an excellent program. But, looking at it on a grandiose scale, I'm not sure we could have provided the students with all they would have needed, within the confines of the resources and facilities immediately available to us," said Mr. Town.

After the decision was made not to continue the project, due to the withdrawal of state funding, Pine Valley

Superintendent Franklin Russell wrote a letter, dated February 17, 1987, to Gov. Mario Cuomo, expressing his sentiments on the Governor's decision to no longer fund the project. The letter is quoted in part:

> Approximately three years ago, you indicated your interest in Regional High Schools of Excellence and demonstrated that support by providing special funds to study the feasibility and to develop plans for implementation.
>
> . . .I am disappointed that funding was not allocated for Western New York. The student base and sparsity of population in Western New York supports the concept of a Regional High School of Excellence. I would surmise that special programs may already be accessible in or near the metropolitan areas. . . .
>
> Dr. James Merrins of Fredonia, New York chaired a team of area representatives, submitted a study and developed a grant that was approved and completed. I feel the study team did an outstanding job. They dedicated many hours of high intensity planning in anticipation of the realization of a much needed program for rural Western New York. A great deal of energy and money was put into this effort. We shared great expectations of an outstanding component in the educational programs in our area.
>
> . . .recognizing the need for such High Schools of Excellence, a concerted, long-range commitment is required. I would ask that you reconsider directing special funds to those programs that fulfilled the planning steps and were ready for implementation for the 1987-88 school year.
>
> Conceptually sound practices need perseverance and commitment to mature and last. Only through this perseverance and long range commitment will we be able to provide the educational leadership that is needed within the State of New York."

Summary

All plans regarding the physical operation of the Regional High School of Excellence were developed on the premise that there was to be full financial support from New York state. Therefore, plans in which each participating district would contribute a share were discussed, but never developed in full detail. Due to the economic conditions in Chautauqua County, and the small number of students the program would have served, it was not realistic to look to

local tax dollars for program funding.

Areas studied by the Business Operations committee were transportation, facilities, and finance. A workable transportation system was devised, however due to the distances between each district participating in the School of Excellence project, it was not possible to come up with a truly streamlined plan. However, there was an efficient solution, considering the tremendous number of variables.

Many different facilities options were explored. There were advantages and disadvantages to each, but it was finally decided that the best option was to use an existing high school site. Further study of this option resulted in a decision to use the Fredonia High School facility (LEA), not because it was the LEA, but because of its central location in relation to the other participating school districts.

Funding plans for the School of Excellence covered facilities development, program development, and operation. Again, various options were considered, and it was decided that total state funding of the School of Excellence was the best option. The knowledge that this option might not become a reality was always there. However, this did not slow down the planning process. Plans developed by the Business Operations committee were ready for implementation, had state funding continued.

CHAPTER 5 CURRICULUM AND STAFFING

The Curriculum and Staffing Committee for the School of Excellence project was the most active of all the working committees. Members of the committee represented a variety of backgrounds. Committee members were: Ms. Joan Caruso, high school English teacher, Fredonia; Ms. Renee Cope, high school English teacher, Silver Creek; Shawn Kelly, high school student, Ripley; Mr. Chuck McMillen, school board member, Ripley; Dr. Donald McFarland, elementary science education professor, SUNY Fredonia; Dr. Susan Newman, non-public school representative (Montessori Preschool, Silver Creek); Mr. Ralph Scazafabo, high school principal, Ripley; Mr. John Siskar, high school art teacher, Fredonia; Dr. Theodore Steinberg, English professor, SUNY Fredonia; Mrs. Peggy Szczukowski, parent, Brocton; Ms. Irene Talarico, school board member, Fredonia: and Mrs. Margaret Van Haneghan, Assistant to the Superintendent, Fredonia.

The Curriculum and Staffing committee was responsible for the area of program development and staffing. This included scope and sequence of the curriculum, determination of the disciplines to be studied, and interfacing with the home school curriculum. Staffing concerns included determining staff selection procedures, staff orientation, and staff in-service programs.

The first task of the Curriculum and Staffing committee was to determine the critical questions in their area of responsibility. Questions identified by the committee in the area of curriculum and program development were:

What is meant by "excellence?"

What will be the philosophy of the school?

What will be the goals of the program?

What will be the focus of the curriculum? Will the program be academic, interdisciplinary?

What should be taught? How will the curriculum differ from a regular school program?

What role, if any, will students have in selecting their learning experiences?

In what ways can the program use independent study, mentors, and/or internships?

How will the program satisfy state education requirements?

How many classes will a student take? What will be the length of the "school day?"

How will the program articulate with the home school program?

How will the effectiveness of the program be evaluated? What kind of information will be of interest to whom? Should we plan on-going and follow-up studies of students?

In the area of staffing, the committee identified the following questions:

Who will develop the curriculum?

How will the teaching staff be selected?

What will be the average class size?

How many teachers will be needed?

What will be their qualifications?

How should staff training be accomplished?

Curriculum

One of the committee's first challenges was to develop a picture of a 'typical' student at the Regional High School of Excellence. Though this was mainly the responsibility of the Student Selection Committee, both committees considered the question of what the students would be like.

Dr. Newman served on both the Student Selection and the Curriculum Committees, and said, "How can we develop this curriculum without knowing what the students are going to be like? And yet, how could they select the students without knowing what the curriculum would be like? I felt we had to focus first on what kinds of students would be coming in, and then develop the curriculum."

Ms. Caruso's statement reflects this initial focus. "What is a gifted student? I guess the one who sees things differently. He's the student who take the teacher's test, and finds six different ways of approaching a question, and has all kinds of qualifying questions about 'What did you really mean here?', when all that was intended was a check of whether the student had read or not. But, he's reading on so many more levels, he has the ability to synthesize and analyze that most of the other kids in the classroom don't have.

"I think that's why many times academically gifted students become a threat to teachers," she said, "because teachers don't want to hear that. That kind of kid takes a lot of time in a classroom, because you are always having to justify, 'Well it works if you do it this way,' but he can see it another way, and he deserves recognition for that. In terms of the way most classrooms are set up for the greatest efficiency, we don't have time to do that. So, to get back to my original definition, I guess it's the student who has six ways of looking at something rather than one."

The diversity of backgrounds of the committee members enhanced their work. "By and large, I would say the committee worked well together and compromised well, (making) good compromises," said Mr. Siskar, high school art teacher. "Everybody had their own special interest (in the project) that was unique. Everyone came from a different viewpoint, and it wasn't always content oriented, but it was always 'soap box oriented.' They said, 'This is the way education should be' or, 'If we really did this right. . .' and I think overall, all those different points of view were differences in degree toward the same direction. I think the end result was good. Even though it might not be the same path I traveled, it was definitely going toward the same location."

Ms. Caruso said, "I think it was important to have people from the college community. When college teachers and high school teachers met in the committees, we had to understand that we were all teachers, that it wasn't 'I'm a college professor and you're a lowly high school teacher.' I think for a project of this sort to be successful, we needed that kind of concern, that the mother of two boys who attended school in Brocton had to understand too that what she had to say was so valuable to us because she was bringing a different insight. We brought many different talents to the committee and I felt that the people were an interesting mix."

The group's diversity was exemplified by Chuck McMillen, a Ripley board member, who is also a chemist for the Hammermill Paper Company. "One thing I was impressed with was that people (the other committee members) were listening to me. I was coming from an entirely different frame of reference than most of the people. I had been educated but I had never been an educator. I was trying to enlighten some people, trying to show the perspective of what I thought industry needed, what they looked for in students coming out of a program, whether a college or university program or a high school program. And people were really interested in what I had to say."

"The way the group coalesced and went through the work was really impressive," said Dr. Steinberg. "They were just a good group to work with. You didn't come to a meeting and

say, 'Well, I haven't read that yet.' Everyone was always well prepared."

"I have to say I was really proud of that group," he said. "One of the goals was that we were supposed to define excellence, and we all decided that was silly and refused to do it, so I thought that was a real good start. We could have sat around and debated what 'excellence' means forever, and what difference would it make to any of our plans? If we are doing excellence here, what are the other kids getting? Are they getting something less than excellence? That's not what we had in mind."

Early activities of the committee involved gathering information related to the questions the committee was using as broad guidelines for program development. The information came from a variety of sources. The committee reviewed selected literature which provided insights and information relevant to the questions. They also solicited information from consultants. Conference calls were held with staff members of recognized schools for academically talented students; the Bronx High School of Science and Calasanctius in Buffalo. The committee also heard presentations on such things as integrating the arts into the curriculum, using mentors and contract learning. In addition, a parent survey was conducted that provided feedback on curriculum emphasis preferences. (This survey will be discussed further in Chapter 7 - Parental Support.) Committee members also attended informational meetings and presentations to boards of education, parents and teachers to gain additional insights for curriculum structure and emphasis.

The definition and articulation of concepts appropriate to the School of Excellence curriculum were solidified based on an analysis of the information collected, and also on recommendations made by committee members.

As specified in the RFP, the committee determined that the curriculum for students at the School of Excellence would be very different from the typical high school academic program. Non-traditional in design, it would avoid a focus on only one or two instructional areas. Instead, a 'holistic' curriculum was envisioned. This curricular structure would consider both the individuality of the student and those learning processes which ensure greater success in school and society. "It was the birth of something new, because there was no structure to start with," said Fredonia school board member Irene Talarico. "Everything we started was through our own research, our own efforts. It wasn't like you already had a curriculum guide and were just filling in the holes. We asked questions like, 'What do we want to do? What is a Regional High School of Excellence? What is the curriculum? How do we want to interweave the different disciplines? Do we want a theme, or do we not want

a theme?'" As these questions were raised, the committee began to make some basic decisions as to how the School of Excellence curriculum should be structured.

The committee decided that all students would be provided with a common foundation of core courses based on a series of broad themes, issues or problems. The common foundation core courses decided upon were language arts, mathematics, social studies and science, based on an interdisciplinary approach. Examples of broad themes, issues or problems might include "man and technology," "the future of communications," "international competition and exploring scientific frontiers."

The curriculum was to emphasize depth of concept, acceleration and a high level of conceptualization. Mr. Siskar, high school art teacher, initially felt that the academic focus was too strong, "but it turned out it wasn't," he said. "It was done more on paper than in design. It was done as a safety outlet. It gave the public a sense of security about a strange and new program."

The program was structured so that the student would spend the first two years (grades 9 and 10) primarily working within a common foundation framework. Students would progress to increasing degrees of individualization in the third and fourth years. Here, more of their time would be spent in two selected fields of concentrated study, based on individual interests and abilities.

"The concept was a focus on individualization," Mr. Siskar said. "You need a base of knowledge that is much more process-oriented than we are giving students. And as such, I think the process is cut across the board a lot more than we are letting students know. The problem-solving processes in math are not that much different than the ones in science or art. If we can get to those core processes and teach those, then the (gifted) student can find the information and apply it, once they have the knowledge of the process. So, to focus on the four core subject areas, that's what I meant by the 'safety valve'."

An important aspect of the project was the development of a unique program. The original RFP stated that "The proposed program must be of a unique character not already available at this time in the participating school districts." The uniqueness of the program proposed by the curriculum committee was its thematic, interdisciplinary approach and the foundation of core courses narrowing to the concentration in one or two fields. The uniqueness of the program was also reflected in the fact that the program of instructional experiences considered the special characteristics and learning styles of students with high levels of intellectual ability. The intent was to blend the two areas of

concentration chosen by the student into a program most suitable to them.

An essential condition for developing a unique, innovative educational program for students with high levels of intellectual ability was that the curriculum design be just as unique and innovative as the students, reflecting the cognitive characteristics inherent in them. These cognitive characteristics include: an unusual capacity for processing information; flexible thought processes; comprehensive synthesis; early ability to delay closure; heightened capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships; early differential pattern for thought processing including thinking of alternatives, thinking in abstract terms, sensing consequences and making generalizations; and an early ability to use and form conceptual frameworks.

The curriculum structure avoided the compartmentalization of knowledge. "One of the really nice things about the plan we came up with for the Regional High School was the interdisciplinary aspect," said Dr. Steinberg. "I think that is really important. Kids need to be able to see that what they are doing in things as far removed as chemistry and English is somehow related, even just in the area of problem solving. Give them a problem and say, 'Here's how a scientist might approach that problem, here's how a humanist might,' and these are all legitimate approaches. Walk around the problem and look at it from different perspectives."

The problem-solving approach was endorsed by the committee as a fundamental, necessary process that students need to learn and use. "I thought that the idea of using the problem-solving approach throughout the curriculum was good, because I don't think that is traditionally used in the schools," said Dr. Newman. "Students need to learn to make decisions and to solve problems. They need to be able to state problems, and then they need to be able to set up a plan to solve the problem, and be able to express orally or in written form the stages they are going to go through to solve the problem and take care of a solution. I thought that was a good approach because I just don't see that being done in schools."

Being locked into an educational structure that moves along at a designated pace can be a frustrating experience for the gifted student. Judith Deiulio, educational planner, illustrated what it can be like to be a gifted student in a regular classroom; "Imagine driving a car up a mountain road behind a slow-moving truck. You can't pass because the road is curvy; you are forced to crawl along at the truck's pace. That's the kind of thing that happens in terms of the learning pace for the gifted student."

Committee member, Dr. Steinberg, had a similar comment, "I think we have to let the students develop at their own speed, and we have to provide something for the ones who are better at certain subjects, or many subjects, and give them a chance to go ahead. Schools are much too slow. . . ."

"We educate everybody in this country; therefore (theoretically), everybody should have an equal education," said Mr. Siskar. "However, in reality, we don't have an equal education. There are a lot of kids that shouldn't, can't, and have no need to sit through six hours of classes. Either they're bright, or have different aptitudes other than verbal skills, and we don't acknowledge them. We just don't do that in the arena of our best academic people, or our best problem solvers. I don't care how you define it, we are ignoring those folks. A hard concept for me to deal with is ignoring quality. Instead of pointing it out and saying, 'Look at this!' we say 'Yeah, you're real good, but try to do it our way.' There's just no logic to that."

Ralph Scazafabo, Ripley High School principal, agreed. "We don't promote being a good student because we don't encourage you to be a good student. We kind of push you into the mainstream. You find out even though the teacher is functioning optimally in that situation, those individual students may be on a down-swing. They never get a chance to peak and hold it there; they actually move down."

The classroom teacher with the gifted student in class faces the challenge of "keeping that student involved on some level," said Ms. Caruso. "I'm sure much of what we do sometimes seems like a waste of time to an academically gifted student. Many times it's a challenge to get that student to share his insights or to share what he knows, because by the time he gets to high school, he's probably learned through the reactions of kids or the reactions of teachers who are threatened by academically gifted children, that it's better not to say this or it's better not to let her know I've read this because of the repercussions. Either they don't want to be singled out, or they are obnoxious, and they want the teacher to know 'I'm a lot smarter than you are,' which of course many times they are. Teachers have to learn to deal with that."

In addition to addressing students' individuality, the curriculum committee also felt that it was possible and necessary to plan a unified program of educational experiences which have common goals for the core areas of the curriculum. The committee recognized that there are common learning processes that link each learner to the content areas. The committee also felt that it was important for students to be able to identify the common threads of learning that run through all bodies of knowledge, and to be able to readily transfer what is learned in one field of

study to the next. Ultimately, the committee was striving for a balance between each student's unique characteristics, and the necessity to simultaneously provide a common foundation from which to grow.

As the work of the committee progressed, an on-going, increasingly comprehensive set of notes on the School of Excellence curriculum was compiled. The committee eventually developed a document intended to serve as the basis of the curriculum they envisioned for the School of Excellence. The document was a culmination of months of hard work, and reflected a great deal of careful thought and effort that had gone into its design. The document is reproduced here.

STATEMENT OF THE BROAD GOALS OF THE
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

This statement outlines the major goals to be achieved through the Regional High School of Excellence curriculum. These goals are to be addressed both within each core subject area, and across the entire program of study.

The goals set forth in this document are intended to serve as the foundation for the Regional High School of Excellence curriculum. Core area courses will be built on this foundation and interrelationships between the core areas will be sought on the basis of these goals.

Document Contents

Broad Goals: Essential Elements which will Guide Student Instruction

Approaches to Curriculum Design

Broad Objectives:
- Content
- Process

Subject Area Objectives
- Social Studies
- English
- Mathematics
- Science

Suggestions for Course Development

An Example of an Interdisciplinary Unit

BROAD GOALS

Essential Elements Which Will Guide The Instruction Of Students

The committee formulated three basic goals which will guide the instruction of the students.

The first goal is the provision of an academically rigorous curriculum based on broad, societal issues, themes or problems. The emphasis will be on structured learning experiences in foundation courses (English, mathematics, science and social studies) broadening to a less-structured individualized approach in later years. Emphasis will be placed on the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and skills in the basic core areas of the curriculum with the integration of such areas as the arts, philosophy and ethics.

A second goal is the development of students' skills in problem-finding, problem-defining and problem-solving. The committee felt it was vital to have emphasis placed on a generative approach as well as a critical-thinking skills approach. Thus, students will be encouraged to think imaginatively. Refinement of critical thinking skills will assist the students in bringing parallel thoughts into convergence, encouraging them to explore non-linear approaches to problem-solving with an emphasis on applicability to real-life situations. An understanding of the use and significance of data and of the development of logical thinking, analytical thinking and responsible decision-making will be stressed. The application of questions and ideas to other areas of the curriculum and student life will also be stressed.

The third goal is the provision for students of an open, synergistic learning environment wherein students will participate in the development of their own learning experiences. Learning will occur through student-student interaction as well as teacher-teacher and teacher-student interaction. The emphasis will be on imparting the means for seeking and obtaining answers rather than on the supplying of answers for their own sake.

APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM DESIGN

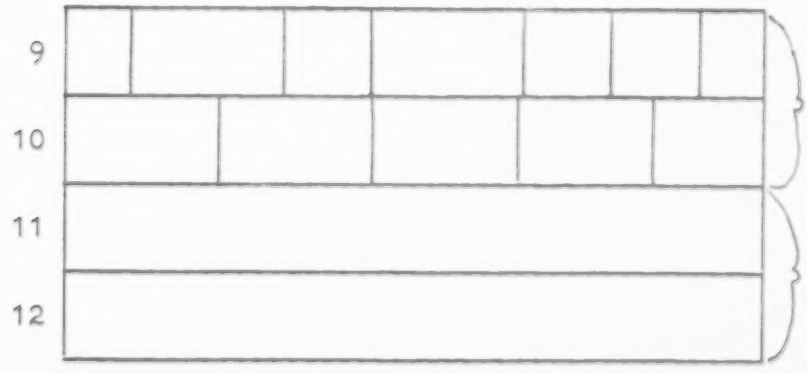
The three approaches discussed below should not be regarded as isolated entitles. They are, in fact, intertwined. For example, it is clear that students should gain mastery over subject matter, but one of the reasons for them to gain such mastery is to enable them to see the interrelationships among the disciplines both in terms of thought processes and problem-solving. This interdisciplinary approach, along with mastery of subject matter, will be essential for the students in their individualized investigations. Thus the three approaches should be regarded as three different but intertwined strands in the development of complex thinking.

I. Subject Matter Approach
The student will demonstrate the ability to master a hierarchical skill development pattern within each core discipline. This is a vertical approach to learning and would be the most teacher directed.

II. Interdisciplinary Approach
The student will demonstrate the ability to integrate knowledge from the various disciplines. This ability to integrate will be developed by means of the problem solving processes brought to bear on a particular theme. The theme will be evident in each of the approaches (subject, interdisciplinary, and individual investigations) and will thus serve as a unifying force within the various approaches. The interdisciplinary approach integrates the disciplines in a horizontal manner.

III. Individualized Investigations Approach
The student will demonstrate his ability to formulate and investigate real problems or topics by using appropriate problem solving processes. This approach combines both vertical and horizontal growth in developing a conceptual framework targeted at a specific problem. In this approach the student plays the most active role while the teacher acts as a facilitator.

General Curricular Plan of the Regional High School of Excellence



The school year will be divided into interdisciplinary units of study based on broad issues, themes or problems.

More time devoted to independent study in two to three areas plus addition of a second foreign language.

BROAD OBJECTIVES

CONTENT

I. TO PROVIDE STUDENTS AN ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS CURRICULUM BASED ON BROAD SOCIETAL ISSUES, THEMES OR PROBLEMS.

II. ACQUISITION OF FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN THE BASIC CORE CURRICULAR AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM WITH INTEGRATION OF SUCH AREAS AS THE ARTS, PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS.

Acquisition of the understanding of the use and significance of data.

- remembering by recognition or recall of ideas, material or phenomena
- knowledge of the referents for specific verbal and non-verbal symbols
- knowledge of terminology
- knowledge of specific facts
- knowledge of the ways of organizing, studying, judging and criticizing ideas and phenomena
- knowledge of characteristic ways of treating and presenting ideas and phenomena
- knowledge of and familiarity with the major contributors to each field
- knowledge of the classes, divisions and arrangements which are regarded as fundamental or useful for a given field, purpose, argument or problem

Development of logical thinking, analytic thinking and resposible decision making

- knowledge of criteria by which facts, principles, opinions and conduct are tested or judged
- knowledge of methods of inquiry, techniques and procedures employed in investigating particular problems and phenomena
- knowledge of the major ideas, schemes and patterns by which phenomena and ideas are organized
- knowledge of the body of principles and generalizations together with their interrelations which present a clear, rounded and systematic view of a complex phenomenon, problem or field

PROCESS

I. TO PROVIDE STUDENTS AN OPEN, SYNERGISTIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

Participation of the students in the development of the learning experiences

- students set personal goals, problems, requirements and criteria possibly in the form of a learning contract
- students work in small and large groups
- students are responsible for presentation of personally learned material to peers

Application of questions and ideas to other areas of the curriculum and student life

- emphasis on work with real problems
- understanding how learning and transfer of learning take place
- application of knowledge with the practice of processes in a wide variety of settings

II. TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' SKILLS IN PROBLEM FINDING, PROBLEM DEFINING AND PROBLEM SOLVING.

A. Critical Thinking Skills

The student will demonstrate the ability to:

1. master and recall facual information concerning a variety of topics;
2. utilize advanced vocabulary;
3. comprehend underlying principles;
4. apply understanding of ideas to new situations;
5. analyze components of a task;
6. synthesize information in a logical fashion;
7. evaluate ideas.

B. Creative Thinking Skills

The students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. generate a large number of ideas concerning a given task (fluency),

2. produce different kinds of ideas that show shifts in thinking (flexibility),

3. imaginatively combine elements of knowledge in unique patterns (originality),

4. adapt, improve and modify basic ideas (elaboration).

5. find solutions without using a step-by-step process (intuition),

6. apply a variety of problem-solving strategies.

C. Planning Skills

The student will demonstrate the ability to:

1. plan ahead by having on hand materials needed to undertake specific activities,

2. state the sequential order in which tasks must be completed when undertaking an activity,

3. define the final goal or outcome of an activity or project,

4. demonstrate interest, motivation and persistence to carry out a specified plan,

5. adapt a plan to changing conditions,

6. identify and state possible contributions of others in a proposed group activity,

7. state and define his goals and priorities and others' goals and priorities even though they may differ,

8. evaluate the results of a plan.

SUBJECT AREA OBJECTIVES

Teachers proposing courses for the Regional High School of Excellence should address the following criteria as appropriate:

I. Social Studies Objectives

A. Self Knowledge

The student will demonstrate the ability to understand his own strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, feelings, and actions and develop a consistency in social behaviors and attitudes which reflects an internalized value system. He will become a flexible individual capable of change.

B. Social Knowledge

The student will demonstrate the ability to understand social issues and develop socially responsible behavior as a part of a family, peer group and community unit.

C. Global Knowledge

The student will demonstrate the ability to understand the interdependence of humanity and develop a sense of global responsibility.

For a unit in Social Studies: The study of history should include the study of historiography and of historical causality, as well as geography and an awareness of cultures other than our own. The study of civics should investigate the workings of our government and other governmental systems in the interest of producing conscientious, educated citizens.

II. English Objectives

The student will demonstrate the ability to clearly and concisely express his own thoughts and feelings through nonverbal, written, and oral modes; interpret the essential thoughts and feelings of others' written and oral presentations and nonverbal cues; and utilize the computer as a tool in both expression and interpretation of ideas through organization and retrieval of information.

For a unit in Language Arts: There should be a strong emphasis on writing and reading. Reading should involve not only the decoding of literal meanings but the study of interpretation and interpretive principles, as well as the uses and abuses of language. Attention should be paid not to simple moralizations but to the importance of language and literature in the individual student's life and to the enjoyment of reading literature.

Although writing cuts across disciplinary boundaries and should receive attention in all areas, there should be a special emphasis on it in Language Arts. Writing should involve the use of pre-writing exercises, the development and organization of ideas, the development of clear thesis statements, the use of evidence and the supporting arguments, the development of appropriate writing voices, an awareness of audience, and the use of correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Students should be required to submit drafts or rewrites as appropriate.

III. Mathematics Objectives

The student will demonstrate an understanding of numbers and geometry including techniques of representation, axiomatic systems, the nature of proof, and applications to problem solving.

Students should have a familiarity with the language of mathematics and be able to apply deductive reasoning to other disciplines. They should be able to express quantitative ideas and have an understanding for basic concepts in the areas of algebra, geometry, statistics, and computing. Applications of trigonometry and calculus should be included and integrated into disciplines that will provide practical applications (i.e. natural sciences).

For a unit in Mathematics: Two aspects should be emphasized:

1. the expansion of, or digression from, traditional topics, e.g. Pythagorean triples, transcendental numbers, probability and statistics, existence proofs, concurrency;

2. the application of mathematical models to problem solving, e.g. statistical analysis, "word problems".

IV. Science Objectives

The student will demonstrate the application of analytic skills to problem solving in science; an understanding of contemporary social problems and the application of scientific principles, approaches and fundamental knowledge to their understanding; and familiarity with the basic concepts in the life and physical sciences.

For a unit in Science:

1. There should be a strong emphasis on hypothesis formation and planning of experiments and investigations, on analytical thinking and synthesis of ideas.

2. Where appropriate, the historical development of an idea should be examined through reading primary sources (e.g. the Harvard Case Histories in Experimental Science).

3. Emphasis should be placed on the thorough investigation of a small number of concepts rather than surveys of the field.

4. Attention should be given to contemporary social concerns which can be addressed by the field under study.

V. Fine and Performing Arts Objectives

The student will demonstrate:

Knowledge and appreciation for various forms, styles, and periods and an understanding of the diversity of cultural heritages which have contributed to various forms and styles. He will deepen his capacity for aesthetic judgment and appreciation and develop an understanding of the arts as a means of self expression and personal satisfaction. The student will demonstrate a knowledge of the area of electronic and/or computer technology as applicable in the Fine Arts and Performing Arts.

<u>For a unit including a fine or performing art</u>: Emphasis should be both on the history of the art and on thinking and problem-solving in that discipline. Activities should highlight the creative arts as one of many alternatives an individual should be able to choose from as a response or reaction to his world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR COURSE DEVELOPMENT

For approval of a course for the High School of Excellence, the instructor will provide a course outline to demonstrate:

A. that the course presents general ideas and principles basic to the field of study, emphasizing
   1. the extent to which the academic discipline or field of study is related to the particular thematic unit of study and to the other disciplines (i.e., uses knowledge from other fields, generates knowledge used by other fields, shares a common body of assumptions/concepts/information with other fields, etc.)

   and one or both of the following:

   2. disagreements within the field (i.e., differences of approach or differences about the appropriateness of methodology, controversy over particular conclusions, differences in interpretation of texts or data, etc.)

   3. the historical development of the discipline or field of study, or of the object of study (e.g., the evolution of ideas, themes, or principles in the field, the contributions of past theorists or figures, changes in the art form, institution, role, or activity studied, etc.)

B. that the course expands and/or builds upon the students' ability to utilize problem solving processes as evidenced by:

   1. his use of diverse problem solving methods in arriving at a solution or conclusion

   2. his ability to describe his thought processes in arriving at a solution

   3. his ability to define his rationale for the thought process he chose

   4. his ability to implement his solution to the problem

C. that the course expands and/or builds upon the major interdisciplinary skills to be developed in the Regional High School; that is, requires that six or more of the following be included:

   1. well written paper(s)

   2. oral presentation

3. utilization of the computer

4. constructive contributions to the instructional group

5. development of an ethical system

6. quantitative analyses

7. community involvement

8. internship, mentorship

D. Evidence for the existence of the above features will be of two kinds:

1. a course description which may include a reading list for the course, a list of assignments, a list of topics to be covered in class sessions, ancillary materials to be used in class (e.g., films, tapes), sample examination or essay questions, etc.

2. a rationale or statement of aims and objectives for the course, which might include some description of what students will be expected to accomplish in the course as well as the instructor's expectations for the course.

All proposals should include components from at least three of the following areas: English (Language Arts?), Social Studies, Mathematics, Science. In addition, music and the visual arts should receive prominent attention.

Proposals should describe the unifying theme, methods by which the interrelationships among the components will be presented, methods by which disagreements within and among the fields will be presented, and the specific content to be covered in each component.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF "REVOLUTION"
(as an example of an interdisciplinary unit of study based on a broad issue, theme or problem)

English: An etymological exploration of the word; differences between "revolution" and "evolution".

A focus on works that describe historical revolutions, on works that were somehow revolutionary themselves, and on works that deal with other kinds of revolutions.

Examples of suggested readings: Common Sense, Civil Disobedience, A Tale of Two Cities, Julius Caesar, Romantic poetry, Wordsworth's "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads," Ibsen's plays, certain dialogues of Plato, The Declaration of Independence, portions of The Federalist Papers, the works of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Rousseau, Marx, and Pasternak.

Possible subjects for biographical reports: Martin Luther, Galileo, Isaac Newton, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon, Simon Bolivar, Charles Darwin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Elizabeth Blackwell, Mahatma Gandi, Albert Einstein, Dr. Martin Luther King.

Social Studies: Causes of revolutions; types of revolutions (economic, social, cultural, religious, political), results of revolutions. Study of some major and minor historical revolutions, American, French, Industrial, Russian, Cuban, Iranian, Hungarian.

Discussion of "peaceful" revolutions.

Science:

Mathematics:

Music: The early 20th Century (1910-1930) major revolution in music and musical style--a break from traditional principles of melody, harmony and atonality. Examples could include atonality and the twelve-tone scale. The work of Schoneberg, Bartok and Stravinsky could be studied as examples.

Art: Art inspiring revolution (Latin America: Diego Rivera; Jose Clemente Brozco; David Alfaro Siqveiros).

Revolutions' effect on art: artists and their works prior to and after any given revolution.

Art as revolution: using principles of revolution, students create a new work of art.

In the School of Excellence curriculum, the core foundation area courses (math, science, English and social studies) would have been integrated with the arts, philosophy and ethics. The courses were to be academically rigorous, and based on broad, societal issues, themes, or problems. The courses would have exceeded the scope and sequence recommended for Regents-level courses in each core subject area.

Other courses such as physical education, foreign languages, health, and all electives (music, art, etc.) were to be taken at the home school.

Unit requirements to be earned for graduation from the School of Excellence were determined. These were:

English:	4
Social Studies:	4
Science:	4
Mathematics:	4
TOTAL:	16

This was the minimum number of credits to be earned through the half-day, shared High School of Excellence program. It was anticipated that many of the students would earn additional credits.

Additional, minimum unit requirements to be earned for graduation through the regular school program included:

Health:	1/2
Physical Education:	1
Foreign Language:	3
Art/Music:	1
TOTAL:	5 1/2

All students were expected to pass the appropriate Regents examinations in the core course areas and in foreign language. However, students would be encouraged to complete these examinations earlier in their school career.

Students would have received both grades and narrative evaluations of their work. The evaluation of the entire School of Excellence program was to be on-going, and would be conducted both in-house and, periodically, through outside evaluators on a more formal basis.

The committee recognized that students attending the School of Excellence would have to go through a transition period from the more traditional curriculum, to which they

had been accustomed, to the non-traditionally structured curriculum of the Regional High School. Speaking on this topic, Dr. Newman said, "Something that I felt had to be dealt with very carefully was the transition. People were talking about the thematic approach, this really different approach, and I felt that you still had to incorporate the subject matter approach too, at least to begin with, because the students were used to that, the parents were used to that, the administrators were used to that. Even though they (the students) are very bright, they're not used to this different way, this different style of learning, and it would take some time to help them get used to that. And the teachers, I'm sure they would be very innovative, but it would be a very different style for them too. It seemed to me that it would have to start out more traditionally and then grow into something a little bit different."

The next step in the planning process for the School of Excellence curriculum was the development of the actual courses to be taught in the four core areas. These were to have been totally new courses; no existing courses were to have been revised.

Eight part-time curriculum planner positions were advertised late in December, 1986. Advertising was heavily concentrated in the school districts participating in the project, with vacancy notices going directly to each teacher in those districts (see Appendix D). An advertisement was also placed in the local newspaper, so all area teachers had an opportunity to apply, even if their district was not taking part in the study. Qualifications were that the planners currently be full-time teachers in public schools, or recently retired from teaching. Certification in the core area and a minimum of five years teaching experience were required.

Two teachers were to work as a team in writing each core curricular area; one as coordinator, both as planners. Salaries were on a stipend basis and the work would involve some evening meetings. The curriculum committee anticipated working closely with each curriculum team. Committee members were planning an initial orientation session to thoroughly acquaint the planners with the work of the committee, and provide guidance and assistance to be sure that course development proceeded in the direction the committee desired. The intention was to have the eight planners correlate their work with each other, and stress interrelationships between the four core courses.

The curriculum planner positions were advertised, and applications received. This took place just prior to the time when it was announced that further state funding was not going to be available for the School of Excellence. Consequently, interviewing and hiring never took place, and the

courses were never developed.

Staffing

The second major responsibility of the committee was staffing. Although the committee as a whole originally set out to study both curriculum and staffing, eventually a staffing subcommittee was formed. This subcommittee defined traits, characteristics and qualifications which School of Excellence teachers should possess. Also, an application procedure was outlined.

For the first year, the application procedure for all professional staff members was to include the following:

- a completed application
- a writing sample
- three recommendations
- interviews with the superintendent of the LEA and the School of Excellence administrator

In succeeding years, the application process was to be expanded to include:

- the candidate's observation of School of Excellence classes for at least one day
- an interview with current School of Excellence teachers
- the candidate's teaching of School of Excellence classes for at least one day

Recruitment for the School of Excellence principal was to be conducted on a state-wide basis. Certification as a School Administrator-Supervisor was required.

To control costs during the first year of operation, until the student population grew to a "cost-effective" size, teachers would have worked part-time in the School of Excellence, and part-time in their home school. Therefore, recruitment in the initial years would have been conducted on a county-wide basis. However, hiring teachers to work part-time for the School of Excellence did become a source of debate. Some committee members expressed concern over the administrative problems that could result from 'sharing' their staff with the School of Excellence. For example, this could have presented some difficult scheduling problems, accentuated by the fact that each district was small, and often did not have the option of shifting different teachers

into different areas to cover all required courses and electives at the home school. As Dr. Steinberg put it, "There were compromises that we had to make; differences of opinion about various things. I thought the teachers should be employed full-time so they could have the other half-day, because they were going to be doing something entirely new, to prepare, to consult, or to hold individual meetings, when necessary. But those are all kinds of things that could be worked out."

Certificated teachers were to teach the core subject matter - English, mathematics, social studies, and science. Teachers from public and private secondary schools, community professionals and personnel from colleges, business and/or industry would have been hired to help teach specialized subject matter. A counseling psychologist would have also been employed to work with the students and their families, and to facilitate articulation with the home schools.

Ms. Caruso felt that it would not have been difficult to find people who were qualified, but it would have been difficult for them to handle duties at both the Regional High School of Excellence and their home school. "I think it would have been difficult to find teachers who could envision how teaching in that school would fit into their already very busy days and lives. If you are talking about a part-time responsibility to the Regional High School and then a part-time responsibility to your home school, I think the difficulty would have been in the logistics of the whole thing."

All professional staff members were expected to possess the following characteristics:

- evidence of understanding and acceptance of the nature and needs of intellectually superior students
- support of special educational programs for intellectually gifted students
- emotional maturity and a strong self-concept
- superior communication (writing and speaking) skills
- a variety of outside interests
- sensitivity to others and a non-authoritarian style
- evidence of a flexible, innovative, experimental approach to problems
- commitment to excellence

The following characteristics were recommended for all teaching staff:

- demonstrated teaching ability in the regular classroom
- evidence of ability to individualize instruction
- evidence of above-average competence in their primary discipline and significant interest or ability in a second discipline
- willingness and ability to participate in team teaching
- evidence of substantial background in teaching gifted education

The committee did not necessarily feel that teachers of gifted students had to be gifted themselves. "But, they certainly would have to be as motivated, if not more so, as the students," said Mr. McMillen. "I think what is important is motivation from several different angles, and high expectations. The teacher has high expectations, the student has high expectations, and that's one of those things where two plus two equals five."

Direct supervision of non-certified instructors was to have been provided by the School of Excellence administrator. It was anticipated that the program of specialized subject matter instruction (whether a special class, supervised independent study mentorships or other arrangements with personnel from higher education and business/industry) would have been coordinated in cooperation with the core area subject matter teachers.

The following first-year staffing levels were determined for the School of Excellence:

Position	Number of Staff	FTE
Superintendent	(1)	0.1
Principal	(1)	0.5
Business Administrator	(1)	0.1
Counseling Psychologist	(1)	0.5
Teachers	(4)	0.67
Secretary	(1)	0.67
Teacher Aide	(1)	1.0

Ancillary teachers/consultants (4) 0.1

It was anticipated that a large portion of the teachers' time would have been spent in cooperative team planning using an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum design. It was of critical importance for the team to assess student needs and interests, and to plan the foundation core in such a way as to lead sequentially and smoothly into the final two-year program. Special attention and consideration would have been given to mentorships, internships, and independent study programs.

This type of curriculum development would have required administrative as well as teacher/staff coordination in order to provide sequential, structured learning experiences tailored specifically to the individual student. The intent was to develop the curriculum in consultation with other staff members, including guidance and counseling personnel, off-campus instructors and administrative personnel. Summer planning would have been an intrinsic part of the curriculum development cycle.

Summary

The work of the Curriculum and Staffing committee represented an intense effort to produce a unique, yet viable program. Though lack of funding prevented the School of Excellence curriculum from becoming a reality, a solid program foundation was developed. Courses in English, mathematics, science and social studies were to form a common core required of all School of Excellence students during their first two years of study. Unfortunately, the actual courses were never developed.

During the last two years of study, students were to have concentrated in two special areas of study reflecting their own special interests and abilities. This is the area in which the program would have become truly "tailor-made." Mentoring, contract learning and independent study were all acknowledged as possible ways this type of learning could have been conducted.

The committee addressed the staffing needs for the School of Excellence and determined required staffing levels for the first year of its operation. Also, an application procedure for School of Excellence personnel was outlined, and qualities and character traits of potential candidates for teaching positions were identified.

In the first year, until a significant student population was enrolled, there would be a sharing of staff between the Regional High School and the home school

district. Teachers were to work at the School of Excellence part-time and at their home school part-time until the program had grown enough to justify full-time employees. However, there was some disagreement on this point. Some committee members felt that the teachers needed the full-time option right from the start because the program was new and different, and would require more extensive planning than a more traditionally structured program. Because the program was not implemented, the true extent of any problems under the part-time employment option could not be determined. However, like any new program, some problems are anticipated and planned for, and some only become apparent after the program has begun to operate. Solutions would have been worked out within the constraints of the program.

The Regional High School of Excellence curriculum, as envisioned by the committee, encompassed many interesting and innovative approaches to learning. The committee had eagerly anticipated putting the plan into motion. When planning had to be suspended due to lack of funds, disappointment ran high.

CHAPTER 6 STUDENT SELECTION

The Student Selection Committee was responsible for determining the student selection procedures for the School of Excellence. Members of the committee included: Dr. Leanna Dunst, psychology professor, State University of New York College at Fredonia; Mr. Shawn Kelly, Ripley high school student; Ms. Phylia Kohl, administrator of the BOCES Head Start program; Dr. Susan Newman, non-public schools representative (owner of the Silver Creek Montessori Pre-School); Mr. Lee Potts, elementary teacher, Pine Valley; Mrs. Connie Schultz, parent, Westfield; Mrs. Faith Scott, Westfield Board of Education member and former Vassar admissions officer; Mrs. Margaret VanHaneghan, Assistant to the Superintendent, Fredonia; and Mrs. Tana Wlodarek, parent, Brocton. Members of the committee believed that the selection of appropriate students was one of the most critical components necessary for the success of the Regional High School of Excellence.

To provide focus and direction for their work, the Student Selection Committee developed the following set of questions:

Should entrance requirements be inclusive or exclusive?

Should entrance be competitive?

From what student population will the school draw?

How will students be selected?

What procedures will be used to determine selection?

Who will do the selecting?

Will there be special training for those involved in the selection process?

At what grade levels may students be admitted?

Shall we maintain consistency from district to district by using an absolute standard, or shall we select on a relative basis by use of a percentage formula?

What provisions will be made for access and equity for "traditionally underrepresented" students and those with handicapping conditions?

How will selection for the school affect the student's

relationship with his peers?

How will students who were "mis-selected" or who for some reason don't perform to standards be removed from the program?

How will students be helped with feelings of being "overwhelmed" with work especially if they are students who are facing challenging work for the first time?

In addition to these questions, the Student Selection Committee also attempted to define the type of student they were seeking for the Regional High School of Excellence. There was no simple description. Mr. Lee Potts said, "Did we come up with (a description), or were we presented with what people thought it would be? From the viewpoint I heard presented in terms of the governor's words, I felt the governor was on the right track, because he (the governor) said there are a lot of kids passing through our system who are the hidden ones, who even by second and third grade are denying that they can do anything, or are doing the minimal. It's been my experience that you really do have to search these kids out, because they are so turned off by the system.

"In this committee, we argued many times, 'What is the gifted child?'" Mr. Potts continued. "Let's not corner ourselves. Let's make sure we are opening ourselves to try to find each and every (gifted child) and not just look at grades, not just look at behavior. (We had to) allow for a more in-depth search so we get the most vital element of the school, the gifted students who are available in the population. That's probably the most difficult aspect (of student selection), because there are many different ways of looking at giftedness. You can look at creativity, you can look at a photographic memory - being able to recite something the child had read - which may not be creative. There are many different definitions of what determines giftedness. I think we were looking for people who could function in a system that challenged them," he said.

Mrs. Connie Schultz added that the school would seek well-rounded students "who wouldn't get lost just because they excelled in only one area."

Ms. Phylis Kohl said, "I think one of the difficult things was to find children who were not achieving (but) who were gifted, and be sure they would function.

"Maybe it was 'too late,'" she said, fearing that by the time some gifted children reached their high school years they would be too disillusioned and frustrated to rise to the challenge of School of Excellence program. "Would they get

into the system even though we knew they were so talented? How would we identify them and how could we make sure? These were the children we were really hoping to find in addition to the (visibly) outstanding (ones)," Ms. Kohl said.

Mr. Potts said that selection of underachievers would surprise and possibly perplex some educators in the students' home schools. "We didn't want to frustrate those teachers and administrators on the outside who would say, 'No, they're not gifted. They haven't done anything in our school. Why should they be going somewhere else?'" he said.

On the other hand, some educators were against the School of Excellence because they feared they would be losing their most talented students. "We were fighting a double-edged sword there," he said, "because other teachers and administrators said, 'Don't pull off the cream of our crop.' But sometimes you wouldn't even be taking their top academic students, because they're not (really) gifted, they're just hard workers who have average or slightly above-average intelligence. Far too often people don't recognize that. They have a mind-set of what a gifted child is."

In their initial discussions, the committee felt that the student selection process would require a written plan, outlining the necessary tasks, activities, personnel, materials and timelines. They also recognized a need to identify students with potential who might not be performing at a significantly high level.

Susan Newman, member of both the Student Selection Committee and the Curriculum Committee, stated, "One thing that kept coming up again and again was looking for a student who is not meeting his potential, although I did feel that we would have to be careful with a student like that. I was a little leery about that being brought up so often, because we wanted a student who was going to be motivated. Perhaps you would be wrong in selecting the student that just wasn't motivated by the classroom and the way it was conducted. Would he really be able to self-initiate, be able to motivate himself in a different type of classroom, or was this just part of his personality? I was leery of just selecting students like that. If they did super fantastic on the SATs, but their grades were way down, I thought that was something to look into."

"Motivation was a factor that we kept bringing up in the selection committee and wondering, 'How are we really going to determine if the student is motivated?'" said Dr. Newman. "The grades would reflect motivation, but what kind of motivation would they reflect? Was this just a student who has been spitting back the answers and didn't really have a good understanding, or was it someone who was really motivated?," she said. "The selection committee had a

difficult task, because it had to find ways of objectively measuring what the students can and cannot do."

Also, the committee acknowledged the importance of using multiple sources of information about the student, rather than relying solely on test results.

The committee gathered information pertinent to the student selection process from a variety of sources. A literature search prepared by members of the faculty and staff at the State University of New York College at Buffalo provided some information. Additional articles and materials were collected by individual committee members, and distributed for committee perusal and reaction. Materials were requested from recognized high schools for gifted and academically advanced students, and were helpful in determining various components of the School of Excellence student selection procedure. In addition, committee members attended informational meetings, heard a presentation on an elementary gifted/talented program selection process, and talked with a school psychologist about the pros and cons of individual and group tests.

The large amount of information collected by the committee provided material for lengthy discussions. Group dialogue focused on the characteristics of excellence, the definition of the measurement devices, and the weighting of the measurement devices.

The group debated whether a set number of students should be selected from each district each year, or whether the top students in the region would be chosen, regardless of their home school. With the second alternative, the number of students from each district might vary from year to year. In fact, some years, a district might not send any students from a particular grade level to the School of Excellence.

The committee also spent a considerable amount of time discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the most commonly used student selection devices, such as test scores, grades, interviews and recommendations. As the committee thoroughly analyzed the materials and presentations, it gradually developed a focus on a definitive recruitment and selection process.

Student Recruitment

Students for the School of Excellence were to be recruited from the school districts participating in the project. Recruitment was to have been conducted with the following principles in mind:

1) The students to be selected are those who excel or have the potential to excel through high productive

performance in mathematical, verbal and/or creative thinking areas. These students are found in all racial and ethnic groups and are both male and female.

2) Each student in the target population will have an opportunity to be considered for the program.

3) The number of students to be involved in the selection phase will be limited to those who are the most likely candidates for participation in the program.

4) The data gathered in the selection process will assist in educational program planning for the students finally admitted to the school.

5) The selection process will be predicated on the notion that there is no one set of criteria that can be considered an absolute in selecting students for this program (no one test, no one score, no one recommendation). Therefore, multiple criteria will be used in the selection process.

Recruitment was to have been conducted in the following manner:

1) In October and November of the year prior to a student's eligibility to attend the Regional High School of Excellence, a team of School of Excellence personnel was to visit local junior high schools to disseminate information about and applications for the School of Excellence.

2) All students scoring at or above the 93rd percentile in reading or mathematics on an in-grade standardized achievement test would have been encouraged to apply. All other students will be eligible to apply.

3) There may have been students from traditionally underrepresented groups who did not meet the established cut-off point on the in-grade standardized achievement test, but who appear to have the potential to succeed in the school. In these cases, the School of Excellence staff would have encouraged guidance counselors in the local schools to urge the students to apply for admission for the school.

In the first year of operation, plans were to admit a class of 9th and 10th graders to the School of Excellence. In years thereafter, only 9th graders would have been recruited, although it would have been possible for 10th

graders to transfer in. No new 11th and 12th graders would be admitted, as at that point, the curriculum would have become too specialized.

"Every student would have an opportunity to apply, and then obviously if they weren't qualified at all, we would find that out very quickly," said Faith Scott. "We wanted to make very sure that every kid at every school that (participated) had an opportunity to apply. We agreed that we would take new students only in the 9th or 10th grade, that by 11th grade, the program would be too far advanced for a kid to enter into."

Selection Process

The Student Selection Committee agreed that students for the School of Excellence would not be selected on the basis of a set percentage or number from each participating school district. Rather, they were to have been selected for their potential for success in the program. All students who met the selection criteria were to have been invited to attend.

Committee member Leanna Dunst, a psychology professor at SUNY Fredonia, had a background in statistical prediction of performance and in judging the reliability and validity of testing. She joined the committee after it had started its work. "I think I had something to offer as far as how to combine the variables," she said. "How do you put the variables together that you are going to use? That was already happening in a way that I felt very comfortable with. I liked what the committee was already doing."

"The one thing that I was anxious that the committee not over-emphasize was the teacher evaluations," she said. "I think that some teachers would do an excellent job of picking out these (gifted) kids and others would miss the ones who should be in the program and pick the ones who shouldn't, just because they might pick the sort of compliant, obedient students who are bright but not that bright, and miss the really bright kid over here who won't do his work because he's reading other stuff. So, I was anxious not to weight that too much. I also know how unreliable interviews are, and I was more anxious that some sort of test material be used."

The selection criteria developed by the committee included:

1) An application which contained several questions designed to elicit the special abilities or interests of the student.

2) The student's written response to a lengthy essay

question on the application.

3) The student's grade point average.

4) The student's most recent achievement test scores.

5) The student's scores on the SAT verbal and mathematics tests.

6) Two recommendations, one from a teacher and another either from a teacher or from some other significant adult such as a scout leader, church group leader, or 4-H leader.

In case of doubt about a student's true ability, the student would have been asked to take an individual intelligence test. This would have been administered by the School of Excellence psychologist at no cost to the student or his family. It was anticipated that this step would also have been an aid in the selection of students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

In a survey conducted by the Parental Support Committee, parents of gifted students in Chautauqua County were asked to indicate what methods they thought should be used to select students for the School of Excellence. The items are listed in the order of preference as indicated by the survey results. That is, teacher recommendation was chosen most often, grades were chosen second most often, etc. The last two items on the list are additional items that were suggested by one survey respondent:

Teacher recommendation
Grades
Interviews
Tests
Self-nomination (essay, project, etc.)
Parent recommendation
Guidance counselor recommendation
Peer nomination

The Student Selection Committee developed a teacher recommendation form. It is reproduced on the following page.

RECOMMENDATION FORM

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063

EVALUATION

Please feel free to write whatever you think is important about this student, including a description of academic and personal characteristics. We are particularly interested in evidence about the candidate's intellectual promise, motivation, relative maturity, integrity, independence, originality, initiative, special talents and enthusiasm. We welcome information that will help us to differentiate this student from others.

RATINGS

Compared to other students whom you have taught, check how you would rate this student in terms of academic skills and potential:

No basis		One of the top few encountered in my career (Top 1%)	Truly Outstanding (top 2% or 3%)	Excellent top 10% but not 2% or 3%	Good (above average)	Average or below
	Creative, original thought					
	Motivation					
	Independence, initiative					
	Intellectual ability					
	Academic achievement					
	Written expression of ideas					
	Effective class discussion					
	Disciplined work habits					
	SUMMARY EVALUATION					

TOTAL _____

Subjects taught the student_____ Length of time you have known student_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

The committee saw interviews as a direct means of exchanging information between the applicant and the School of Excellence selection team. It would have provided the selection team with material of a dimension above and beyond that of the paperwork submitted by the applicant.

Initially, the interview was considered a useful selection tool in terms of getting to know the student on a more personal level rather than relying solely on the application materials. Further discussion and research on the use of interviews as a part of the total selection process caused the committee to rethink their position regarding use of an interview as a required part of the selection process. Some committee members began to question whether or not it was worth it to put the student through the "trauma" of an interview. The committee also found in their research that, in the college admission process, the interview usually doesn't count that heavily, and becomes a significant factor in only about 10% of the admission decisions made. Most other schools that used an interview used it primarily as an informational tool, not one of the major selection criteria.

The committee eventually decided not to include the interview as a required part of the selection process. However, it would be used in cases where it was felt that additional information on the student was necessary in order to make an appropriate decision.

The student "self-nomination" involved the submission of some form of student work such as projects, hobbies or personal endeavors in communication, such as poetry, public speaking or other similar areas. The student's work would be reviewed in an attempt to assess patterns and levels of ability as well as commitment to task.

Use of a student project and recommendations would help to "balance out" the use of test scores and grade point averages in the selection process. However, (standardized) test scores would have been useful in determining the relative strengths of the student in both aptitude and achievement. They would also help in identifying students who may be underachieving in terms of their school grades. These tests would be administered by an outside agency, have national norms, and discern levels of student functioning.

The review of the application materials for each student was to have been conducted by a committee consisting of:

- the School of Excellence principal
- two School of Excellence teachers
- the School of Excellence psychologist
- a representative of the business/industrial/professional community

At least one member of this committee would have had a substantial background in the education of gifted students. The review team would make its decisions regarding student selection based on the following premise:

> Students admitted to the Regional High School of Excellence in Northern Chautauqua County will be those who demonstrate high logical, mathematical and verbal abilities, creativity, motivation (and other affective factors) as evidenced by:
>
> standardized achievement tests
> SAT scores
> G.P.A.
> an essay
> a project
> two recommendations

These items were the ones the Student Selection Committee, after extensive study and deliberation, chose as the final set of criteria for student selection. Use of the SAT was extensively debated by Student Selection Committee members and members of the larger Advisory Committee. The use of standardized tests in general, and the SAT in particular, was an issue that was not quickly resolved. As stated earlier, test score criteria provided a balance for the more subjective criteria such as recommendations and student projects.

Opponents of the SAT felt that: 1) the test might not have been appropriate for some highly creative students who are not good "test takers," and 2) relying too heavily on these test scores may have excluded some of the very students the school was seeking. Several members of the Advisory Committee never fully accepted use of the SAT, although personal feelings were eventually set aside in light of the objective and purpose of the overall selection process.

Why the SAT? While this is a test designed for college-bound eleventh and twelfth graders, the students applying for admission to the Regional High School of Excellence would be eighth graders. The Student Selection Committee considered other standardized test instruments (such as the PSAT, or individualized IQ tests) more appropriate to this age level. However, it was felt that these tests would not really serve the purpose of the School of Excellence; to challenge these students to the fullest extent possible, and have them successfully respond to that challenge. Having an eighth grader take the SAT, and achieve respectable results was indicative of the type of challenge School of Excellence students would be expected to face on a daily basis. Though perhaps not the best solution to the standardized test "problem", the SAT would still be a useful

indicator of those students with truly outstanding ability.

Dr. Dunst said, "It (the SAT) might not always, for everyone, be accurate. I knew that anyway, but I'm a little more inclined to believe that you would miss some good people with a test like that. Some sort of essay or project (in addition to the SAT) might be a better way. I definitely would not throw (the SAT) out, I think it's valuable. My interest was in addressing the needs of the kids with verbal and mathematical (abilities) and that's why the SAT seemed to fit. Our hope was that even though they weren't performing in school, their ability would come through. (The SAT tests) their aptitude, rather than being an achievement test."

"We talked a lot about the Bronx High School of Science and some of those other schools, for instance, and there is no perfect answer," said Mrs. Faith Scott. "(The) Bronx High School of Science has their own entrance examination. Building any kind of a test like that was out of the question. We didn't have the facilities or the know-how.

"You can't take the (local) school records, they are all different," she said. "And the schools also give different national tests, so there wasn't any one that you could pick. So the talk of having these kids in the eighth grade take the SAT, which is geared for eleventh graders, in my book was about as good a compromise as you could get. Then you scale down your expectations, you don't expect them to get 800, you aren't going to expect them to know (about a subject they haven't taken yet) or penalize them because they don't. But it would test general knowledge, it would test reading ability, it would test basic mathematical concepts. The consensus was that group IQ tests are never very satisfactory, that was not the answer."

Another reason the SAT was eventually chosen was because it is the instrument used in the nationally-known Johns Hopkins Talent Search. In the Talent Search, seventh grade students take the SAT as one measure of their ability and potential. The Talent Search administers the SAT to the top 3 percent of the seventh grade population in the Talent Search region, which encompasses 19 states from Virginia through Maine and six states on the West Coast. Seventh graders in this group with outstanding SAT scores have the opportunity to participate in residential summer enrichment programs in Skidmore, N.Y., Carlisle, Penna., Lancaster, Penna., Claremont, Calif. or a commuter program at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md.

Since the SAT is the accepted standard of measurement for this prestigious and respected program for the advancement of academically talented students conducted by Johns Hopkins University, the committee decided that the SAT was a reasonable choice as one of the admission criteria. "We had

to look at it economically," said Mr. Potts. "Any individualized IQ test is going to cost $50 to $100 an hour to have administered, and it would tell you these kids are pretty bright. I think the thing that won us all over was seeing the test results and seeing these four students in the verbal area and four or five in the math area score above the national average or right around the national average for high school seniors, and they were in seventh grade in a school district like this (Fredonia)," he said. Mrs. Schultz added, "That's what we were really looking for out of that (the SAT); a way to really segregate that portion."

"This test is administered to (thousands) of students nationally at that level for that specific reason at Johns Hopkins," said Mr. Potts. "So if it works for them, and their program, I think that it would be a fairly wise choice for our situation. The tool has to be used properly, of course."

The Student Selection Committee set up a timeline for the student application, review, selection and notification process:

Oct. - Nov.	Visits to participating local schools, distribution of applications and brochures.
Dec. - Feb.	Informational interviews with parents and students at the School of Excellence.
First Saturday in December	Student candidates take the SAT test.
Mid-January	SAT results mailed to School of Excellence.
February 1	Deadline for submission of student applications.
March 1	All material from home schools (test data, GPA, teacher recommendations) due at the School of Excellence admissions office.
March 15	First review of applicants; scheduling of individual IQ tests as needed.
April 15	Second review of applicants.
May 1	Acceptance letters mailed to selected students.

June 1	Students' letters of commitment to attend due to the School of Excellence.

The Student Selection Committee was cognizant of the fact that students would require an orientation to the School of Excellence, because of its very different program. The informational interviews conducted on-site during the early part of the application process would have been the start of that orientation. Because planning for the School of Excellence was suspended, the committee was unable to develop a complete orientation program. However, some initial recommendations included:

1) Asking students to make an initial commitment to remain at the School of Excellence for one full semester.

2) Having the School of Excellence guidance counselor or school psychologist meet individually with all new students once a month during the first semester.

3) Having new students meet in small groups of eight to ten, once a month during the first semester to discuss common problems.

4) Having a multi-session orientation program for the students' parents, developed by the Parental Support Committee.

5) Holding conferences with the parents of the new students three times during the first semester, with the first one held no later than six weeks after the opening of school.

6) In case of a student's poor adjustment to the school, holding conferences with the student, parent(s), teachers and other School of Excellence staff on an as-needed basis.

7) In cases where it is determined that a student, for some reason, was not appropriate for the School of Excellence program, every effort would be made to protect the student's ego and ease his return to a full-time program at his home school.

In regard to the provisions listed above, Dr. Newman said, "How many students would really want to come to a school like (the Regional High School of Excellence)? We thought it was great, but would they really want to come, and would their parents really want them to come? We talked about the misselected student. What about the student who couldn't make it? Or what about the student who didn't want

to stay? Particularly in those high school years, there is a tendency to want to stay with your friends. Once it got off the ground and there were kids going and they were enjoying it, it probably would have been alright. But initially, it seems that it could be kind of difficult," she said.

Mrs. Scott commented on the importance of involving parents: "We had to be absolutely sure that the parents understood the program so there would be no conflict between the child and the parent. They both had to think this was a good program."

The Student Selection Committee developed an application form for the Regional High School of Excellence. Application materials from other schools were obtained and studied, and were useful references in the construction of the School of Excellence form.

A Student Selection Matrix was also developed, on which to record information on each criterion for admission. "The matrix was a guide," said Mr. Potts. "There is no one way to determine giftedness. We just try to use something that works, something that gives an indication, something that separates this child from that child, something to function as a first level screen.

"The matrix is an organizational device," said Mr. Potts. "It allows you to rank order your children by comparing various elements you have identified as being important. This (the matrix) at least allows you to organize them in some fashion and gives you a total score, so you have rank order from all the students who apply, and might allow you to make some judgment on a varied number of students right off the bat. At least, it would indicate where further investigation was required. That was part of our plan, if we had major questions, to seek individual psychological examinations."

Both the application form and the matrix are reproduced on the following pages.

APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

Please print or type

Return application to:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

___date rec'd ___intrv
___SAT ___schl data
___rec #1 ___proj
___rec #2

Applicant Information

Name _____ Grade for next school year: _____
Last First Middle

Home Address _____
Number Street City State Zip

Telephone _____ Birthdate _____ Male____ Female____

Name of parent or guardian _____
Last First

Home Address (if different from applicant's) _____
Number Street

_____ Telephone _____
City State Zip

Applying for grade: ____9 ____10 for September 19____ Present grade in school ____

School Presently Attending _____

School Address _____ Phone _____

Circle one: Public Private Parochial

Other Schools you have attended (list in order, beginning with most recent):

School Address Dates Attended

_____

_____

_____

Have you registered to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)? __ Yes __ No

If yes, when? _____ If no, when will you take it? _____

[You may attach an additional page if your answers to any of the questions on this page exceed the space provided.]

What do you like to do in your spare time? Explain. _____

_____

Briefly describe your travel experiences and participation in extra-curricular activities, both in and out of school (Include clubs, fairs, workshops, research projects, jobs, volunteer work, music organizations.)_____

_____

_____

_____

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you taken a foreign language?_____ If so, which language?

_____

List any honors or awards you have won (both in and out of school)

_____

_____

_____

What special abilities or interests do you have which would qualify you for entrance to the Regional High School of Excellence?

_____

_____

_____

_____

PERSONAL STATEMENT

The essay section of this Application is an opportunity for you to help us become acquainted with you in ways different from courses, grades, test scores and other objective data. It enables you to demonstrate your ability to organize thoughts and express yourself. With this objective, please write an essay about one of the topics listed below. You may use the back of this page if your essay exceeds the limits of this page. Your essay will be evaluated on: proper interpretation of the topic; quality of response; creativity.

(1) If you could travel through time and interview a prominent figure in the arts, politics, religion, or science, for example, whom would you choose and why?

(2) What do you think the famous scientist, Isaac Newton, meant when he said:

> "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscoverered before me."

How does this statement apply to you?

(3) What do you think really needs to be created or invented? Describe this creation or invention as you imagine it. How might this creation or invention improve the world as a whole? What problems might be caused by this creation or invention? Why is it realistic to think "it" will be created or invented?

(4) Some people have said Western New York is a depressed area. Do you agree? If not, why? If so, what changes would you make to improve the situation?

My signature below indicates that all the information contained in this application is complete, factually correct, and honestly presented.

_____ _____

Signature of student Date

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

STUDENT SELECTION MATRIX

ASSESSMENT ITEMS (please include date)	X 5	X 4	X 3	X 2	X 1	ITEM TOTALS
ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES: Reading Total	99-97 %ile	96-93 %ile	92-89 %ile	88-85 %ile	84-80 %ile	
ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES: Mathematics Total	99-97 %ile	96-93 %ile	92-89 %ile	88-85 %ile	84-80 %ile	
SAT - Mathematics	800-540	530-470	460-420	360-410	350-200	
SAT- Verbal	800-500	490-400	390-350	340-300	290-200	
Grade Point Average	100-97 (A+)	96-93 (A)	92-89 (A-)	88-85 (B+)	84 ↓ (B-)	
Teacher Recommendation	Top 1 %	Top 2-3%	Top 10%	Good	Average or Below	
Second Recommendation	Top 1 %	Top 2-3%	Top 10%	Good	Average or Below	
Essay	Outstanding	Excellent	Superior	Good	Average	
Project	Outstanding	Excellent	Superior	Good	Average	
					TOTAL SCORE	

Pilot Test of the Selection Process

During the summer of 1986, a pilot test of the student selection process was conducted. Thirty students from the Fredonia Middle School took part. These students had just completed the seventh grade, and were initially identified for the pilot test on the basis of their scores on the sixth grade Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Students who scored at or above the 93rd percentile in either reading or math qualified to take part in the pilot test of the process.

The student's participation in the pilot test was voluntary, and written parental permission was required. A cover letter was sent to the parents (see Appendix E1). Explaining the purpose of the pilot test and outlining the selection process, the letter stated that participation in the pilot test did not indicate that the child would be admitted to the proposed School of Excellence.

The Student Selection Matrix on page 107 shows all the items necessary to complete the actual application process. Of the nine items listed, six were used for the pilot test. These were:

1) in-grade achievement test scores in reading
2) in-grade achievement test scores in math
3) SAT mathematics scores
4) SAT verbal scores
5) grade point average
6) the essay

Students first took the SAT, and later completed and returned a Regional High School of Excellence application form, which included an essay question. The week before the SAT was given, an informational meeting, conducted by Mrs. Judith Deiulio, the educational planner, was held for the students. At this meeting, Mrs. Deiulio gave the students a thorough orientation to the pilot test process. She reviewed the concept of the Regional High School of Excellence, and explained the role of the Student Selection Committee.

Mrs. Deiulio described the purpose of doing a pilot test of the student selection process, and emphasized the important role the students would be playing in helping to improve the process. The parts of the process which the students took part in directly were: the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (from sixth grade), the student's grade point average, completion of the School of Excellence application form, and the SAT. Mrs. Deiulio explained to the students that the SAT was normally given to high school seniors, and that as seventh graders they would not be expected to be able to answer all the questions.

The two sections of the test were described. The verbal section tests for vocabulary, verbal reasoning, and level of understanding of what is read. The mathematics section measures the ability to solve problems using arithmetic, elementary algebra, and geometry. The students were told that this was a test they could not study for.

The SAT was administered on July 2, 1986, during the first week of summer vacation. Students were then sent the School of Excellence application form, along with a short questionnaire regarding the level of difficulty and quality of the form. The questionnaire and a synopsis of student responses to it are found in Appendix E2. The forms were returned during the months of July and August. Of the 30 students who originally took the SAT, 18 students completed and returned the application form. Data from this group of 18 students was then entered into the Student Matrix, and the committee studied the results.

Based on the results of the pilot test, the SAT score breakdowns on the matrix were modified somewhat. The matrix reproduced earlier in this chapter is the modified version.

Regional High School SAT pilot test scores were compared to the Johns Hopkins 1986 Talent Search SAT test scores The Talent Search had 23,732 seventh graders take this test - 12,085 males and 11,647 females. The highest possible score on the SAT is 800 on the mathematics section, and 800 on the verbal section.

AVERAGE SCORES

	Math	Verbal
Regional High School of Excellence pilot test group	378	330
Johns Hopkins Talent Search group	400	357

Table 6.1

In the Regional High School pilot test group, the highest mathematics score was 510 and the highest verbal score was 490. The Johns Hopkins Talent Search considers mathematical scores of 500 or more, and verbal scores of 430 or more as truly outstanding for seventh graders. Based on these results, the Student Selection committee was satisfied with the use of the SAT as an indicator of potential and ability, and decided to retain it as a part of the student selection process.

"Some children on our pilot study had SAT scores that would be very nice verbal scores for average high school students," said Mr. Potts. "And these were seventh graders. But their math scores would be terrible. Then you would have a child who would have great math scores, and we would look at essays, and we found only about four students who could write an essay of quality. Again, that was four out of 18. You wouldn't expect too many more than that out of a pilot study."

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 show the SAT mathematics and verbal scores of the 30 students who comprised the pilot test group. Comparative data from the Johns Hopkins Talent Search is also shown.

SAT Average Mathematical Scores

Johns Hopkins Talent Search group - 1986 (7th graders) n = 23,732	Regional High School pilot test group - June 1986 (7th graders) n = 30
400	378

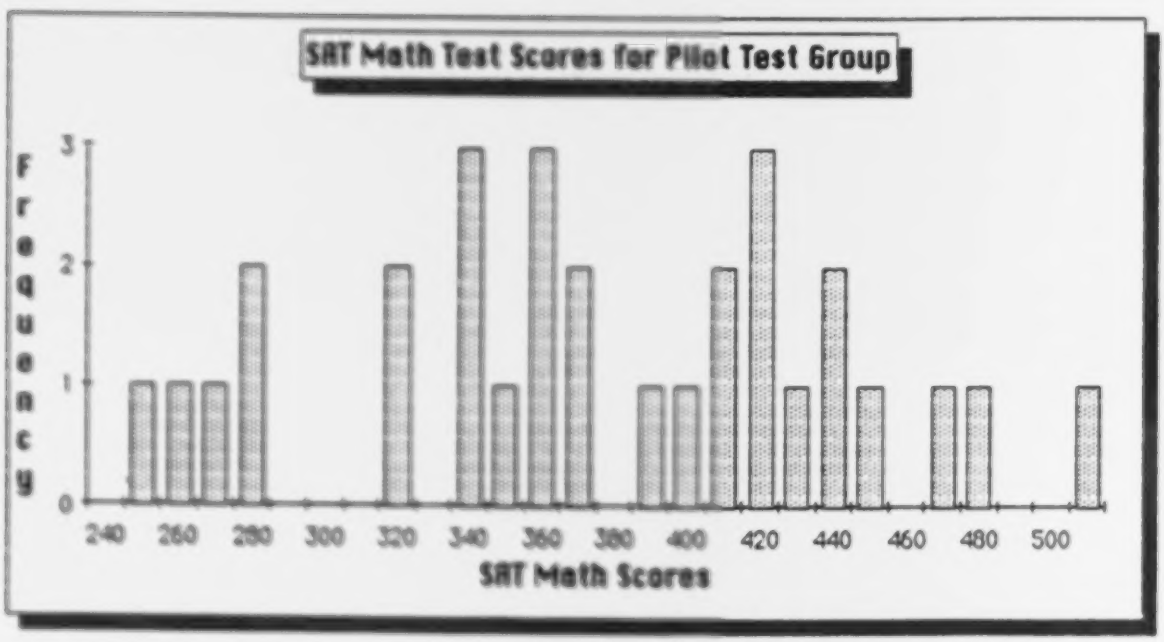


Figure 6.1

SAT Average Verbal Scores

Johns Hopkins Talent Search group - 1986 (7th graders) n = 23,732	Regional High School pilot test group - June 1986 (7th graders) n = 30
357	330

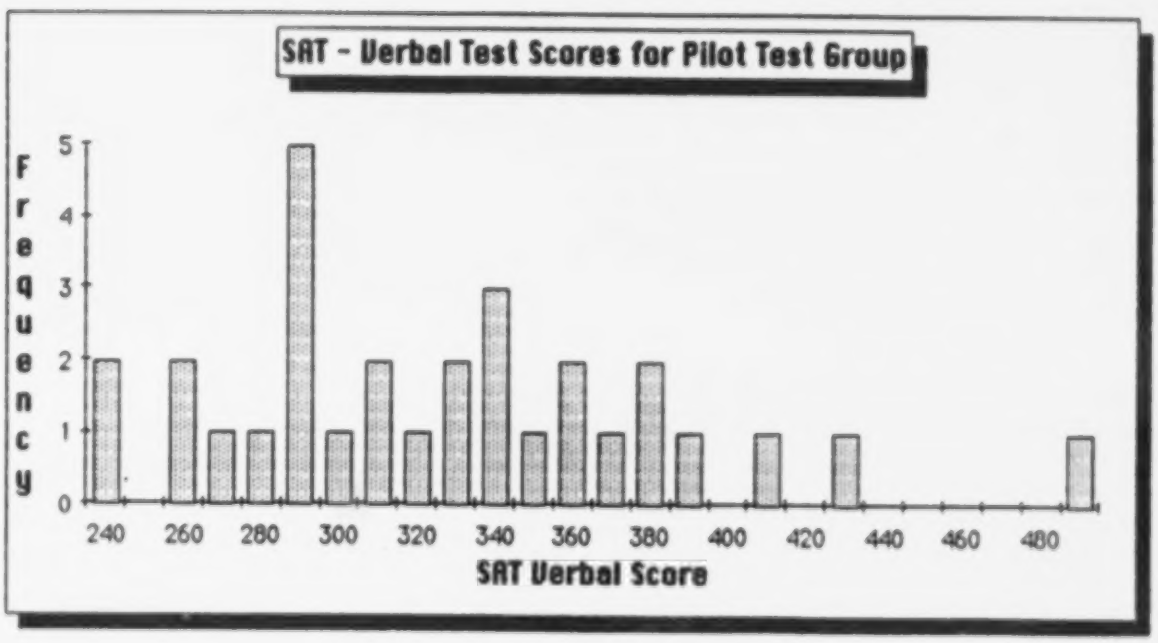


Figure 6.2

The Student Selection Committee was disappointed with the quality of the essays the students wrote as a part of their application. The essays were reviewed and scored by two individuals; a professor of English at SUNY Fredonia, and a middle school English teacher. All identifiers were removed. Each essay received a numerical score, with 5 being high and 1 being the low score. Both raters tended to assign the same score to each essay, and the majority of the essays received scores of 1 or 2.

The committee speculated that there may have been several reasons for this. One reason is that students don't know how to organize their thoughts and approach a writing task. "I'm so disappointed with anything a child writes these days," said Faith Scott. "I really am appalled. They just don't get enough of it, and there's a lot of talk about more requirements for writing in the elementary schools and I hope they do it.

"I used to read all those essays when I was admitting students to Vassar. These are high school seniors, and a lot of them from very good schools. You could always tell when somebody had proofread it and corrected it, but what a tremendous variety showed up. Some kids had an idea, had a beginning, a middle and an end, and knew how to put it all together and had something to say coherently, but many of them didn't. So it's not just Chautauqua County that doesn't write well. But I think that's something that the New York state school systems are going to have to face."

Another reason is that the students may have required additional explanation on what was expected in the essay (for example, two or three poorly constructed sentences were not acceptable.) "I think more can be expected of kids if the standards are raised," said Faith Scott. "If more is expected, you tend to produce more." The Student Selection Committee felt that perhaps the expectations regarding the essays had not initially been made clear to the students taking part in the pilot test.

Another factor the committee recognized was that the pilot test was conducted during the summer, and the students voluntarily spent their time taking the SAT and filling out the application. The students knew it was a pilot test, and that they were the "guinea pigs." Therefore, they may not have attached as much importance to successfully completing these two tasks as they might have under a different set of circumstances.

"One of the best things we did on the selection committee was to have the pilot study," Dr. Newman said. "That, I think, was real important because we had all these hypothetical criteria set out, and really the criteria stayed the same even after the pilot study. But, I think people

learned a lot from the study. The matrix was developed and weighted in a certain way before the study was done, and then the weightings were changed (SAT score breakdowns) somewhat afterwards. The essays that were given to the students apparently were not changed, but I think that people learned that these students, although gifted or very bright, were still teenagers, still 12-, 13-, 14-year-olds, and although their minds were very quick, their experiences were still somewhat limited and perhaps their writing background was somewhat limited too and that showed up in the essays."

"There could have been some other explanations for (the poor essays)," Dr. Newman added, "because the students knew in the pilot study that they weren't going to be accepted into the program, that this wasn't for acceptance, although at that particular time, I don't think that anyone knew that the project wasn't going to be funded. So, if they had done very well, they might have been given special consideration for the program. I would think they would have put forth quite a bit of effort."

The Student Selection Committee carefully reviewed the other information provided by the students on the application forms, and decided to make only one small modification to the form. A question asking what hobbies or special interests the student had was changed to ask what the students liked to do in their spare time. The purpose of the question was to help begin to identify any special interest areas or abilities the student may have that might not otherwise show up in the selection process. This information would also be useful for program planning. However, this was again an area in which the Student Selection Committee was disappointed with the results. "I thought they (student interests) were quite mundane," said Ms. Kohl. "(Their answers were) stamps, traveling."

"There wasn't anything exciting," Mrs. Schultz said. "That just goes to show the need for this type of a high school, because the area does not offer those students those kinds of outlets to work to their optimum. They just kind of glide along because nothing really stimulates them."

The Student Selection Committee felt that the pilot test was a worthwhile endeavor. They were able to obtain feedback indicating that the process they had developed did work. It is interesting to note that throughout the entire Regional High School of Excellence study project, this was the only time that a group of students was actually involved in a direct way with one of the planned aspects of the project.

Summary

The Student Selection Committee fulfilled its responsibility of devising a comprehensive selection process. The selection process was based on multiple criteria. There was a balance between objective items such as test scores and G.P.A., and subjective items such as essays and projects that allowed for a more personal insight into the student. The process was devised to identify, at least to some extent, each student's special talents, interests, and abilities.

The student selection process was pilot tested. Though pilot test conditions were not ideal, they provided useful information on the worthiness of the selection process. Several minor modifications were made to the process as a result of the pilot test.

CHAPTER 7 PARENTAL SUPPORT

The original Request for Proposal (RFP) placed an emphasis on parental involvement in the study project. It required that the Planning Grant Advisory Committee be partially composed of parents of potential students. The RFP stated:

> As part of the implementation of this plan, a subcommittee of the Planning Grant Advisory Committee must be formed, headed by the parent representatives of the Committee, for the purpose of involving wider parent representation and involvement to determine parent interest in and potential support for the Regional High School of Excellence.

Members of the Parental Support Committee included: Mrs. Diane Bedell, parent, Pine Valley; Mrs. Linda Benchley, parent, Forestville; Mrs. Diana Carpus, parent and board of education member, Silver Creek; Mr. William Donlin, parent, Ripley; Mrs. Jane Dorman, non-public schools representative; Mr. Timothy Dye, parent, Pine Valley; Mr. Thomas Heary, high school principal, Fredonia; Mrs. Nancy Kamble, parent, Fredonia; Mr. Douglas LeBarron, parent and board of education member, Forestville; Mrs. Sandra McElroy, parent, Dunkirk; Mr. Larry McGuinn, parent, Westfield; and Ms. Grace Perez de la Garza, parent, Fredonia.

The continued involvement and support of parents of potential students was a long-range goal of the Parental Support Committee. The more immediate responsibilities of the Parental Support Committee included determining the level of interest in, and potential support for, the School of Excellence. The committee also served as a contact and stimulus to parent interest and involvement at the local school district level. "It was an important committee as far as the community was considered," said Mr. LeBarron.

"The parent members became very involved," said Mr. Heary. "One reason was because they had some vested interest in the project, probably because they felt they may have had a son or daughter who would qualify. They worked hard."

"Being interested in education, I felt that it would be a nice program for our kids to get involved in," Mr. LeBarron said of the Regional High School. "I also happen to have a son who falls into that (gifted) category, so that made it even more enticing. I wound up on the Parental Support Committee."

As with all other working committees on the project, a set of study questions was first developed to guide committee activities. These included:

What is the current level of parental interest in and support for a Regional High School of Excellence?

What methods could be used to build support among parents and community?

What should be the role of parents in student selection and school governance?

Should a parent support group be organized?

How might parents be used as resources for the school program?

Will parents need special "inservice" training before the school begins?

As the committee began their work, an interesting, indirect benefit began to emerge. The committee itself, in a way, became its own support group. Members of the committee found that they could share their feelings and concerns about their children with one another, and that other committee members were sympathetic. Mrs. Dorman said, "People think if you have a bright kid or a smart kid, 'Oh gee, isn't that wonderful, there are no problems.' Sometimes there are a lot of problems." For example, she said, bright children often suffer from low self-esteem.

Mrs. Dorman went on to say that the committee "spent a lot of time talking to (parents) who were so thankful that there was someone they could talk to about their kid, because it's very hard to talk about a smart kid. People just don't believe that you should have any concerns. If you have a handicapped child, there is all kinds of help you can get," she said. "If you have a gifted child and you are trying to get some help or some understanding, it is very difficult. Our society really goes the other way. Not that we shouldn't, I think we should do all for the handicapped child that we can. But I think for years we've just sort of let that (gifted) child sit there."

Ms. Perez de la Garza added, "If you're having some kind of problem with a kid who's a straight A student, you can't talk to anybody about it unless their kid is a gifted or straight A student. People even think it's a backwards way of bragging."

"The more you can learn, the better off you are as a parent," said Mr. LeBarron. "This was an opportune time to learn what other parents had been up against, also how to go about dealing with my own son. It was very educational."

Members of the committee also felt that it was important for very bright students to have to opportunity to interact with one another. The Student Selection Committee, expressing a similar concern, had recommended that new students at the School of Excellence meet in small groups once a month during the first semester to discuss common problems.

In commenting on the need for bright students to interact with one another, Ms. Perez de la Garza said, "It would seem logical to pool them, to give them some kind of peer interaction. . .to give each other a little stimulation, competition, so they could talk about things. My kids will often say, 'I can't talk about this with my friends because they will think I'm bragging.'" Mrs. Dorman added, "I think it's very important to have those other kids. Maybe those who are hiding it (their intelligence) as best they can would blossom a little bit more."

"This program was to get those children in with their own peers," said Mr. LeBarron. "It would allow them to be creative, which they are not in a lot of smaller school districts. They are just not afforded that opportunity."

The Parental Support Committee was involved in one aspect of the determination of need for a Regional High School of Excellence. Early in the fall of 1985, the committee sent a survey throughout the county to 498 parents of previously identified gifted students. The students had either participated in BOCES programs for gifted students in grades 3-6, or in the Chautauqua County School Boards' Association Summer Enrichment Program for students in grades 4-12.

The survey asked parents if they thought a Regional High School of Excellence should be developed in northern Chautauqua County. The survey had a response rate of 40 percent. Eighty percent of the respondents favored the development of a Regional High School of Excellence in the north county. While 62 percent stated that if their children were selected, they would permit them to attend, 33 percent said they needed more information.

In the spring, 1986 semester, a second survey was sent to the parents who had responded to the first. This survey had a 36 percent response rate. Survey results indicated that parents placed the most importance on the Regional High School curriculum. Other items that the parents ranked as

especially important were the interest and enthusiasm of the student, and the quality of the teaching staff. A high level of support was expressed for the formation of a Parents' Council for the School of Excellence, and having a parent representative on the school's Board of Governance. The respondents also indicated a high level of support for both a parent and a student orientation program. "I felt that the parents who responded to the survey, responded enthusiastically," said Mr. Heary. "There was a level of commitment to the project that began to develop among a group of parents."

The parent surveys and summaries of the results can be found in Appendices F1 and F2. Many respondents wrote additional comments on the survey forms. These are summarized and included with the tabulation of results. The in-depth responses of two individuals in particular are also included. They are helpful in providing a better understanding of the parent perspective regarding the Regional High School of Excellence.

Committee members gathered information through reviewing pertinent literature. They were also encouraged to attend the informational meetings held during the fall, 1985 semester in the participating local school districts. In addition, a conference call was held with the president of the Parents' Association of the Calasanctius School of Buffalo, New York. A summary of the questions and responses from this conference call are located in Appendix F3.

In addition, the committee met with two teachers in the BOCES ORBITT (Opportunity to Realize Better Ideas Through Thinking) program and two parents whose children were students in the program. (ORBITT is a one-day-a-week pull-out program for gifted students in northern Chautauqua County school districts.) The minutes of this meeting, containing some of the key questions and answers from the parents and teachers, are reproduced below:

Q: How do the students react to being bused to a program outside their home school district? What is the reaction in the home school to the students' being gone one full day every week? Is "elitism" an issue?

A: The parents were initially reluctant to allow their children to participate. The bus situation with older students can be a bad one but the students have handled it well. The parents were probably more concerned than the students were about the busing.

The home school teachers have handled the situation well. These days schools are less structured anyway and students are used to other students leaving the "self-contained" classroom for a variety of reasons--lessons,

independent study at the library, etc. Teachers have invited the ORBITT children to share their G/T class activities with the home school class. Teachers are also important in helping students deal with tolerance and acceptance of others.

Q: For you as a parent, what has been the most significant thing about the ORBITT program?

A: The student's developing self-confidence to "make it" in the real world--to be proud of her own ability. The student's feeling good about herself--being comfortable with her abilities and with a lack of ability in some areas.

The two visiting parents emphasized the importance of educating parents on the topic of children with special abilities. They need positive feedback on their own parenting skills and some positive reasons for letting their children participate in special programs.

The parents also noted the need for students to be able to easily transfer academically back to their home schools.

Integration with students and programs at the home school will require real efforts by parents, students, and staff at both schools.

The point was made that a great deal more awareness needs to be undertaken among parents in all communities--that the very parents who should be aware of the proposed High School of Excellence are not.

The Parental Support Committee recognized the need to inform and involve parents in as many ways as possible with the School of Excellence. "I think a lot of people's negative thoughts are because they are not well informed about the subject. To get involved and to hear everything that's going on and to know the possibilities makes a big difference," said Mrs. Bedell. "I think a lot of parents didn't like the idea of taking their kids away from friends (in the home school)."

"On the part of parents who aren't connected with teaching in any way, I think a lot of it was ignorance of what it was really about," said Ms. Perez de la Garza. "I heard quite a few comments that, 'Well, this isn't the ideal way to proceed.' My personal reaction is, I agree, there are potentially better ways to set up an educational system for the really brilliant and highly gifted, but if this is the only funding that is being offered, you take it. You have to be a little pragmatic. If this is the only thing going, then

you try to work with it and try to make it the best possible. It's something; it's better than nothing."

A topical outline for a parent orientation program was drafted. The logical outcome of such a program would have been the formation of a Parent Association of the School of Excellence. Due to the suspension of planning for the Regional High School of Excellence, the program was never fully developed.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS FOR PARENT ORIENTATION PROGRAM

1. Concepts of intelligence
   Characteristics of gifted children

2. The Regional High School of Excellence
   - The selection process
   - The curriculum
   - Evaluation
   - Transition to college

3. The gifted underachiever
   Motivating the gifted underachiever

4. The gifted child and his family
   - Characteristics of gifted children that may lead to problems
   - The gifted child and his siblings
   - The gifted adolescent
   - Coping with pressure; stress management
   - Recognizing creative behavior
   - The parent's role as educators

5. Bibliography (see Appendix F4)

Committee members felt that the committee accomplished what they had initially set out to do "up to this point." "There would be a lot more to do beginning right about now if it were going to start up," said Ms. Perez de la Garza. "(For example) really find out what kind of support there is in the community, and as far as opposition, why the opposition exists, what can be done.

"Last year," she said, "we found out what other (high schools for gifted students) had experienced, how much parent support they need, how much they actually get, how much parent input they need, how much they get, what do they do when they get too much and the parents are running the school. It was sort of doing a little research and homework. I couldn't think of a great deal that the parent committee could do this year until we got the go-ahead."

"I think (more grass roots support for the project) would have taken place, probably in the second year," said Mr. Heary. "I do think this cadre of parents, this idea of getting them together and marketing them, would have taken place in the second year."

Some members felt that the Parental Support Committee didn't have enough to do and that they could have better served the project in other ways. "It was the one committee required by the state, and therefore I felt we were there just because we had to be," said Mrs. Bedell.

"I think really the parents could have served on other committees and maybe we could have gotten the same kind of thing done and felt like we were doing a little more," she said. "I was in support of this idea (the Regional High School), but I think at the planning stage the parents could have been used a little better in more useful ways. I think once it (the School of Excellence) got organized, then a parent committee could have really been helpful.

"True, the state had to know there were parents who were supportive. And I think just the fact that we were willing to serve somehow would have shown that support," she said. "But, I think we might have been more useful in other areas."

Mr. Heary noted that there was a certain amount of frustration felt by committee members, but cited different reasons. "I think there was a frustration that went through all the committees because of the fact that the idea (the Regional High School) was something that, by being on the committee, you became very excited about. But, the reality factor that you kept hearing about was that this wasn't going to happen unless it's funded.

"And the other thing, people were looking for specifics," Mr. Heary continued. "People (on the committees) would constantly be looking at it in terms of 'I have this practical kind of question or practical problem or specific question or specific problem,' and sometimes those things couldn't be answered. I think too, some people were a little bit irregular in their attendance at committee meetings, and that was a frustration too.

"It was the kind of project that we worked very hard on," he said, "but at the same time it was a concept you were dealing with. And because you knew right from the very beginning that there was a possibility that this thing would never fly, I think people were questioning 'Well, why are we even doing this if we don't know for sure?' If they felt it was definitely going to happen, and our job is to get together and plan over the next couple years, I think that would have made them a little more committed.

"From the very beginning, the funding issue was right out front," Mr. Heary said. "There was no attempt to hide that as an issue. I think that's one of the things that got in the way of more districts and more parents becoming committed to the project. I really do think we sold people on the concept. With funding, we could have created a school that would have served as a model. In time we could have brought other schools into the project. But the funding thing was just sitting out there as a constant reminder that we had to take care of that. I feel that's what brought the project down, was the funding."

Summary

The Parental Support Committee was an important component of the Regional High School study project. Although the committee did some initial surveying and information gathering, they were unable to progress past a certain point until other parts of the School of Excellence program had been more fully developed. Had a full curriculum been developed, and the actual students selected for the school, the role of the Parental Support Committee would have become more pronounced. As it was, the committee was only able to develop preliminary plans for a parent orientation program, which would have been the first step in the formation of a School of Excellence Parents' Association.

Results of the two parent surveys conducted by the committee indicated that there was a substantial group of parents supportive of the School of Excellence concept. The committee felt this was encouraging, and anticipated that there could have been a significant contribution by this group to the School of Excellence program, once it had been developed.

CHAPTER 8 NETWORKING

The Networking Committee had a two-fold responsibility. The committee was to determine the role of the private sector (business, industry, and other elements) in the creation and operation of the School of Excellence. The committee also explored ways in which the college community could contribute to the program.

Committee members included: Mr. Lou DiPalma, Executive Vice President, Northern Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Richard Gilman, geology professor, SUNY College at Fredonia; Mr. Thomas Heary, high school principal, Fredonia; Mr. Ronald Lucas, board of education member, Pine Valley; Russell Newman, President, Excelco Development, Inc., Silver Creek; Mr. Noel Saint-Amour, Special Metals Corp., Dunkirk; Dr. A. Cutler Silliman, board of education member, Fredonia; and Dr. Stephen Warner, English professor, SUNY College at Fredonia.

Study questions initially developed by the committee included:

What community resources (people, places and activities) are available to benefit the program?

How can the program involve the community through civic and other community groups?

In what ways might the school access the community for mentors?

What educational opportunities are available through access to college facilities and faculty?

What contributions (monetary and educational) can area business/industry make to the school?
How might the business community be involved in articulation for students beyond the high school years?

As the committee members began their work, they found that there was some difficulty in clearly defining the Regional High School of Excellence concept to area businesses and industries. Though this focus improved with the progress of the project, it did make it more difficult to "sell" the idea in the beginning. "(The business community) didn't know exactly what they were being asked to support," said Mr. Heary. "They felt there were too many unanswered questions (at that time). "The other thing was that a lot of the business people had questions they wanted answered, and in

the first year of planning, we weren't in a position to give answers to their questions. We were dealing with a concept - they were looking for very specific kinds of answers," he said.

The committee also needed more particulars about how business and industry could play a role in the Regional High School program in order to make stronger contacts with business leaders. "My feeling as a businessman is, to do anything meaningful, we had to go back with something specific," said Mr. Newman. He added that business people are busy and are not interested in abstract concepts.

"Probably the biggest challenge was just getting business people to realize and understand what the program was all about," said Mr. DiPalma. "I think the survey we sent out was a rather positive indication from the business community that if there was some way that we could plug in and assist, we would certainly entertain that."

"We need to attract the talents and skills of good people and bring them together so we can improve the quality of life in every aspect," said Mr. DiPalma. "I just see the Regional High School of Excellence as important because it is another tool to improve that quality of life."

Articulation With Higher Education

The Networking Committee worked on the development of a plan for the use of college resources. The educational planner, Judith Deiulio, and the executive director, James Merrins, met with the then newly-appointed president of the SUNY College at Fredonia and the two vice-presidents of the SUNY College at Fredonia. The SUNY College at Fredonia agreed to cooperate with the Regional High School of Excellence. This included sharing faculty who would be compensated. The president of the college released a statement of support for the Regional High School of Excellence.

The Networking Committee later developed a scale for the use of college personnel. The scale is outlined below:

A. Student Contacts

1. Instruction equivalent to a three-hour course (3 hours per week X 15 weeks = 45 contact hours) during one semester.

2. Instruction equivalent to a one-hour mini-course (3 hours per week X 5 weeks = 15 contact hours).

3. Independent study with one or more students and/or with use of laboratory space.

4. Independent study with one or more students on a limited basis.

5. Occasional guest/lecture contact.

B. Teacher Contacts

1. Curriculum development with regular teachers during the summer or school year.

2. Other consultant work with teachers during the summer or school year.

"The project came along at about the same time there was a change in administration at the college," Mr. Heary said. "SUNY Fredonia was getting a new president, and his commitment was very important to the project. That commitment came, but it didn't come out as strongly as what we were looking for.

"They gave a rather cautious commitment to it," Mr. Heary said of the college, "and that again was because there was a change in the administration. To say you are supporting it or cooperating with it is very nice, but somehow standing up for it was necessary. I can imagine what the reaction would have been if the president of the college appeared with the superintendent at some of the informational meetings."

Articulation With the Private Sector

The Networking Committee surveyed 125 area businesses and industries to determine the degree of interest in participating in the Regional High School of Excellence. The cover letter and survey instrument can be found in Appendix G1.

"The business community is an important segment of the community at large and the state wanted to see a commitment, a level of support from the business community," said Mr. DiPalma. "I think the business community was in a position to provide some meaningful support. From the businessman's perspective, here's an additional program, an additional opportunity, that could act as a magnet, if you will, to not only keep people here, but act as an incentive to draw new people into the area to work. I felt in talking

with the other business representatives that this was an important consideration in terms of lending their support of the program.

"I would say that the state placed a heavy emphasis on business support, and I think the business community saw it as a vested interest as well," said Mr. DiPalma. "Education is such a key aspect when you talk about quality of life factors, in terms of keeping people here and attracting new people and companies as well. I feel education is one of our real strengths, and anything we can do to enhance that strength is going to put us in a better competitive position vis-a-vis other areas in the state and other areas in the country.

"When you take a look at the positives and the negatives, the tax environment is a definite negative that we have, so we really have to accentuate the positives," Mr. DiPalma continued. "I believe the strong educational system here is one of the positives that we really have to maximize."

All businesses and industries received a phone call from a committee member before a cover letter and survey were mailed to them. A fact sheet of information about the School of Excellence was also included to help familiarize the business people with the school (see Appendix G2). The survey asked respondents to indicate whether they understood and supported the School of Excellence concept. Of 125 surveys mailed out, 81, or 65% were returned. The results are summarized in Table 8.1.

Statement of Support	Number	Percent
Support the concept of a Regional High School of Excellence but do not foresee a formal relationship between the school and our company.	33	41
Wish to be kept informed of progress in planning for the Regional High School of Excellence.	48	59
Believe that a Regional High School of Excellence would be helpful to Northern Chautauqua County's business climate.	56	69
Will discuss cooperative programs between our company and the Regional High School of Excellence.	31	38
Will help locate mentors for students.	14	16
Will arrange student internships in my company.	22	28
Will provide personnel to teach in the Regional High School of Excellence.	5	6

Table 8.1

"I thought that it was important that the business community, through the Chamber of Commerce, take a supportive position, at least in terms of providing input into the effort and making sure that business interests were being expressed," said Mr. DiPalma. "I feel there is a sincere interest not only on the part of myself but the business community as well, to enhance any and all educational opportunities that are going to make this area attractive for people to not only stay here but for new individuals to come into the community. I felt that the program offered a unique opportunity to the gifted, and I think that fact was evident when we sent out the surveys. The business community on the whole found it to be another potential asset," he said.

Possible ways in which business and industry could help

the Regional High School of Excellence were identified. "We were at loose ends because we started out by asking industrialists in the area whether they would support the concept, and we never got to the point where we had an actual product to show them," said Dr. Silliman. "You are dealing with businessmen, who want to know what they are buying. They don't want to buy just an idea. I think we would have gotten much greater support had we delayed and could have said, 'This is what you can do,' not 'This is what you might do.' I think the Networking Committee would have been much more fruitful once the program was in place," he said.

"We found that there was an interest from industry, and that they would be willing to support it (the School of Excellence) in certain ways," said Mr. Ron Lucas, Pine Valley board of education member. "If we had been able to more clearly define what they could have done for us, it would have been better. We could have done that farther along (in the project)," he said.

The Networking Committee did identify the following as possible ways in which local business and industry could help:

- discussion of cooperative programs
- helping to locate mentors
- arranging student mentorships
- providing personnel to teach

A chart was developed which listed local businesses and industries, and indicated areas in which they would be willing to provide help. The chart is shown on the following pages.

BUSINESSES OFFERING TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC ASSISTANCE TO REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE (FROM FALL, 1985 SURVEY)

Name of Business & Contact	Discuss cooperative programs	Help locate mentors	Arrange student mentorships	Provide personnel to teach
AL TECH SPECIALTY STEEL, Dunkirk Tool steel and stainless steel wire, rods and bars	X		X	
THE RED WING COMPANY, Fredonia Private label packer, manufacturer of preserves, jellies, ketchup, chili sauce, peanut butter, syrups, salad dressings, spaghetti sauce and barbecue sauce	X	X	X	X
RALSTON PURINA COMPANY, Dunkirk Pet foods manufacturer	X	X	X	
NATIONAL FUEL GAS, Dunkirk Utility company	X	X		
DUNKIRK RADIATOR CORP., Dunkirk Cast iron home heating boilers	X			
TOPS MARKET, Dunkirk Supermarket	X		X	
TRUE TEMPER CORP., Dunkirk Garden implement manufacturer	X		X	X
FREDONIA SEED CO., INC., Fredonia Packet seeds company	X	X	X	
FORBES & WAGNER, INC., Silver Creek Electrical components manufacturer	X			
RAINBOW PRESS OF FREDONIA, Fredonia Printing business			X	
THE WHITE INN, INC., Fredonia Restaurant and hotel	X	X	X	
FERRANTI-PACKARD TRANSFORMER, INC. Dunkirk Small distribution transformers	X		X	

Name of Business & Contact	Discuss cooperative programs	Help locate mentors	Arrange student mentorships	Provide personnel to teach
D & F TELEPHONE, Fredonia Local telephone company, serving Fredonia and a portion of the town of Dunkirk	X		X	
SPECIAL METALS CORP., Dunkirk Forging plant	X			
A.J. WAHL, INC., Brocton Special purpose and ceramic machinery	X			
AMERICAN MASSAGE SALES & MFG. CORP. Silver Creek Therapeutic message equipment electrical adjustable beds	X		X	
ZIG ZAG CORP., Silver Creek Printing and converting machinery			X	
BROOKS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, Dunkirk 176-bed hospital	X	X	X	
LAKE SHORE HOSPITAL, Irving 49-bed hospital	X		X	
SLAWSON & MEAD, INC., Dunkirk Metal fabrication, agricultural equipment manufacturing, industrial sales	X	?	?	?
CHAUTAUQUA GENERAL GROUP, INC., Fredonia Insurance agency			X	
JIM'S DRY CLEANER, INC., Dunkirk	X			
WDOE, LAKE ERIE COMMUNICATIONS, Dunkirk Radio station			X	

Name of Business & Contact	Discuss cooperative programs	Help locate mentors	Arrange student mentorships	Provide personnel to teach
KNOWLTON'S, Dunkirk Photography and pet store	X			
McENTARFER APOTHECARY, INC., Dunkirk	X	X	X	X
M & T BANK, Dunkirk	X			
LIBERTY NORSTAR BANK, N.A., FREDONIA	X			
M & T BANK, Silver Creek		X		
CRINO, HEAD, SCHRANTZ & JOHNSON, Fredonia Accounting firm	X	X		
WESTFIELD FAMILY PHYSICIAN, Westfield	X			
TRAVID DEVELOPMENT, Forestville Construction contractor	X		X	
THE BOOK NOOK, Dunkirk Bookstore	X		X	X
ARCHITECTURE FIRM, Fredonia	X	X	X	
BAR ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN CHAUTAUQUA, INC.		X		
DEAN INSURANCE & TRAVEL, Dunkirk		X		
LATIMER'S APPLIANCE CENTER, Fredonia	X	X	X	X
HARRINGTON SIGNS, Dunkirk Sign painting	X			
Mr. Daniel Ryel, CLU, Fredonia Insurance agent		X	X	X
TOTALS	30	14	22	6

In addition to directly contacting businesses and industries through phone calls and the survey, Dr. Merrins also spoke at a meeting of the Chautauqua County Industrial Round Table. This meeting was initiated by Mr. DiPalma, and took place in October, 1985. The following month, the Northern Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce newsletter included an article on the Regional High School of Excellence The article indicated that an important part of the study was the business community's support of the program. It stated, "We ask that you give careful attention to the request for your support when you are contacted."

In an attempt to familiarize business people with the School of Excellence and to gain their support for the project, the following notice was sent to members of the business community. The Networking Committee developed a set of guidelines to follow in responding to the request for a statement of support of the Regional High School of Excellence. This information was sent to local businesses and industries. They were directed to return their written statements to the project's educational planner.

YOUR SUPPORT OF THE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Seven northern Chautauqua County school districts have received a grant to study a practical way to establish a school to help our most able, talented and academically ambitious students achieve their greatest potential.

The proposed school would offer a half-day, morning program with a unique curriculum. The curriculum would include a variety of learning resources, advanced teaching methods and the involvement of parents, business and industry, and higher education in the education of students.

If you would like to write a letter of support for the High School of Excellence as an individual, representing your company or representing your organization, we suggest the inclusion of the following components as appropriate:

* indication of <u>understanding</u> of the concept of the proposed High School of Excellence

* a statement of <u>general</u> <u>support</u> for the High School of Excellence

* <u>specific</u> <u>support</u> you, your company or organization would consider providing
  Examples: Shared personnel
  Shared services (computers)
  Shared facilities (laboratories, offices)

Mentors
Grants
Scholarships

* thoughts about the <u>future</u> of the project
  Examples: impact on your company or organization
  impact on the community
  opportunity for students

* <u>encouragement</u> to the project leadership and staff

Any personalization of your letter of support would be greatly appreciated.

<u>Summary</u>

The long range goal of the Networking Committee was to provide the School of Excellence with to provide additional, unique educational resources and opportunities not readily available in the traditional school setting. "Because this is more of a rural area, we just don't have the resources, on a single school basis, to take care of these kids," said Mr. Lucas. "They need that little extra, and I think it's tough for the individual schools to give that." The Networking Committee, in gaining the support of business, industry and higher education, would have ensured that the School of Excellence could have provided "that little extra" needed by the gifted student.

The Networking Committee's initial mission was to garner support for the concept among local business, industry and higher education concerns. However, attempting to do this without knowing exactly what that concept was or what it would entail was a drawback. Dr. Stephen Warner, professor of English at SUNY Fredonia, said that committee members basically told business people that the governor was looking for a show of support and that it would bode well for the project if the local business community would say it is in favor of excellence in education.

Specific questions about how the school would operate and how business people might be involved were difficult to answer. This put committee members at a disadvantage in trying to "sell" the concept. Dr. Warner went on to say that the business people seemed to be somewhat confused by the survey, because they were not certain about what they were being asked to endorse.

Though the Networking Committee experienced some difficulty in being able to present a clear definition and explanation of the project to area business and higher

education concerns, they did feel that they had accomplished what they had set out to do. "We were charged with setting up some communication links with various groups, especially the business community," said Mr. DiPalma. "I came away feeling that maybe some additional effort could have been made in terms of maximizing the understanding of the program, and maybe trying to get the business community a little more involved (as in mentorships, internships, etc.). It would have been nice if we could have had a little more one-on-one type of personal communication as opposed to a general survey or putting something in the mail.

"I'm a firm believer that if you can sit down on a one-to-one basis and get into a meaningful discussion with people, you have an opportunity to assess a person's reaction, maybe address their questions more directly," he said. "Leave it to the mails and the newspapers and you may not always accomplish your goal as effectively as you would want to.

"I think overall, the effort was a good one, but it would have been nice to have a little more one-on-one contact," said Mr. DiPalma. "And I say that knowing full well that you (the Regional High School program) didn't have a huge staff; those are obvious limitations. I guess with the resources and the staff we had to work with, that's all we could realistically expect. I think that if people understand what you are trying to do, the potential for cooperation and support is much, much greater."

Mr. Newman said the program could have encouraged a "sense of community" in the students. "This area is such a disaster now financially," he said. "The perception is that there is no opportunity here for young people." Mr. Newman added that a school like the Regional High School of Excellence may have caused its gifted students to develop a more intense interest in the community and a desire to come back to the community after graduating from college.

Mr. DiPalma agreed. "Our children are probably one of our biggest exports right now. Their talents and skills are benefitting other communities rather than their home community." It was his hope that attending the Regional High School of Excellence would fully develop the students' talents, and would encourage them to return to Northern Chautauqua County to make vital contributions to the community's long-term growth.

CHAPTER 9 PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

As work on the Regional High School of Excellence study project progressed, a number of problems and issues emerged. Though they varied in significance, they were all important. Each one raised questions that needed to be addressed, although specific answers could not always be provided. They are presented so that those who consider starting their own programs can develop an awareness of possible problems or issues they may encounter. As Fredonia High School Principal Tom Heary said, "Hindsight is insight."

Funding

The most significant issue throughout the entire project was the cost and funding of the School of Excellence. It was consistently raised as an issue in discussions with a variety of audiences, and in written comments on the surveys that were conducted. The demographics and economic climate of the northern Chautauqua County area did not present the financial base necessary to locally fund a Regional High School of Excellence. Resources available in the private sector are limited. The geographic area is basically agriculture, medium-sized manufacturing companies, and small businesses. Neither local school boards nor the communities they serve were able to raise local taxes to fund a Regional High School of Excellence.

The local communities, boards of education and members of the project's Advisory Committee were unanimous in their accord that the state should assume long-range, full fiscal responsibility for the development and operation of the Regional High School of Excellence. The high cost of such programs was cited as one of the primary reasons that full programs had not previously evolved. The feeling was, since the School of Excellence concept was part of the state's plan to enhance the reputation and attractiveness of the state as a whole, that the state should accept long term fiscal responsibility for the School.

The lack of a commitment on long range funding of the School of Excellence was a major weak spot in the structure of the entire project. Tom Heary, Fredonia High School principal, said, "I just sensed from our own faculty response and in talking with people from other districts, somehow we were in trouble right from the very beginning, because we couldn't answer questions about money."

Marilyn Maytum, president of the Fredonia Board of Education, encountered similar concerns, voiced by taxpayers and members of the community. "When I initially went out in the community and talked to people about it, I was excited about it. I really thought it was a great thing. There could be more to this than just helping gifted students. This could be a real community involvement type of thing. As I went out and talked to people, I found that people were interested, but their biggest concern, and I heard this over and over again, was 'Who's going to pay for it?'"

Ralph Scazafabo, Ripley High School principal, noted that, "Dollars and cents are always the bottom line. That was always a damper on this program, because in the back of our minds, we always knew 'We aren't really getting any support, (from the state) are we?'"

Those involved with the project felt that they could never really put their complete faith in the state to provide long-term funding. This was based mainly on past state funding patterns. The state often provides initial funding to get a program started, and then later mandates the program without continuing the funding. The program then becomes the fiscal responsibility of the local education agency. This past history of the state's "modus operandi" was the cause of uncertainty and skepticism about funding that dogged the project all the way through.

Total state support was not the only funding option considered, although it was felt to be the most desirable alternative by the Advisory Committee as a whole. There were other suggestions made on the matter. Robert Olczak, Westfield Superintendent, felt that the best way to fund the Regional High School of Excellence would have been "through a cooperative effort" on the part of all the participating districts "because they are more able to control the situation. It's not in the political arena or a political question. It's there because it's meeting a locally identified need, with the support of all the districts that did want to have it, and they (the districts) would provide the funding for it, and the governance. It's a real case of democratic local control."

Mr. Olczak felt that ideally the School of Excellence should be 100 percent locally funded. "But the concept of seed money to get it started was a carrot that made it more attractive, and I think that's a good idea. Because otherwise, there wouldn't be a stimulus other than someone like Dr. Merrins, who feels a commitment to this kind of a program and did take a real leadership role in trying to get it for our area," he said.

Another funding alternative was running the program through BOCES. The Fredonia project was the only one totally

independent of a BOCES. There was one other project in the state that was being run by a school district (Oneonta), but there was a heavy involvement of the BOCES in that project. "There are some economic reasons why people should consider going through BOCES," said Skip Palmer, director of labor relations at BOCES. "The shared services, state taxes and aid formulas that could come into play could help appreciably. It would take an interest by two or more local districts, and then they (BOCES) could do it. Any program that two or more districts want, BOCES has to provide, if it's legal. That's the law."

However, serious consideration was never really given to any alternatives other than full state funding. When the funding didn't come through, the project had no way of moving into the implementation phase. Governor Cuomo initially proposed same year shared services through BOCES for the Regional High School projects operating across the state, but this was not approved by the legislature. However, this would not have affected the fate of the Fredonia project, because unlike the other projects across the state, it was an independent LEA.

"Once the funding died, it (the School of Excellence project) died," said Mr. Palmer. "It was kind of like, 'It was okay if it was free, but don't expect us to pay anything for it.'"

Silver Creek Superintendent James Goodspeed said, "The fact that it stayed alive as long as it did was due in part to their (Dr. Merrins' and Mrs. Deiulio's) work, and due in part to the fact that they held out great hope until the end that Governor Cuomo would provide some funds for it. Without the funds, there was never a prayer of a chance of that thing flying.

"Had the study been made through BOCES, there might have been greater support for it," said Mr. Goodspeed. "It's not unlike other services we buy from BOCES, an already established intermediate school system. The fact that this one was somehow taken over by a different sort of LEA, a single school district, I don't think helped it at all. BOCES as the LEA would have been more logical, but I'm not sure that the BOCES campus would have been a logical place to hold the classes," he said. "Other than that, I think it still would have blossomed to the extent that it did, and would have passed out of the picture the same way when the funding was denied. I don't think it would have made one bit of difference who was the LEA, or what course was pursued in studying it."

Dr. A. Cutler Silliman, member of the Fredonia Board of Education, noted the effect that lack of funding had on the individuals involved in planning for the School of

Excellence. "I do think it (the project) was cut off before it had a chance to grow," he said. "I don't believe that every institution that you create is there forever, and it may have run out of steam. But we had the steam cut out from us. We were beginning to get somewhere. I feel really sorry for all those people who worked very hard. I'm sorry that (their) ideas did not come to fruition."

Program Identification

The study project was often referred to as the Regional High School of Excellence at Fredonia. This strong association of what was supposed to be a shared project (and eventually a shared program) with a single school district was regarded with a certain amount of skepticism. Much of that was the result of misinformation, or lack of understanding of the true nature of the project. One of the most often asked questions was "Why wasn't this being done by BOCES? Why was it being done by a local school district?"

"There are really good answers for that," said Skip Palmer. As Mr. Palmer perceived it, first, it was an interest of Dr. Merrins. Second, the BOCES district superintendent was retiring, and there was no one at BOCES who was compelled to act as spearhead for the project. "Good programs usually have someone who wants them," said Mr. Palmer. "In fairness to those who say 'why wasn't it going through BOCES?', there was no one at BOCES pushing to get it. It wasn't like there was competition and it was awarded to Fredonia. Fredonia was the only one who applied to run it.

"I also heard on occasion that it was only being done because Fredonia was going to decline in enrollment, and this was going to ensure their teachers' jobs. That was said to me several times, and I'm not saying there was any validity at all. Perceptions are perceptions, and you deal with what people perceive. Perception and truth rarely cross trails."

Brocton Superintendent Richard Gloss agreed. "It didn't seem like anybody at BOCES was interested and Jim Merrins was," he said. "And whether it was for his school or for all schools, it makes no difference, at least he got something started. I think that's what doomed it, maybe, was that it wasn't at BOCES, and the state couldn't fund it. But if (Dr. Merrins) hadn't started this idea, it wouldn't have even gotten off the ground.

"If the state wants to have a state school of excellence, then I guess they should fund it," said Mr. Gloss. "But I can't see (a separate school) myself. If you want to put it through with the BOCES, and have programs there that work for the kids, fine, but not a separate school. That takes care of all the questions about 'Why is

it going to be at Fredonia?' And I think those are legitimate concerns that people in other communities have. But you've already passed that hurdle if you are dealing with BOCES, because they know that BOCES is an extension of 'our school,'" he said.

Similar feelings were expressed by others. Brocton parent Tana Wlordarek said, "A regional high school cannot be tied so strongly to any one school. It's got to be a neutral, geographical, equal representation type of setting, such as a BOCES. I'm not saying it has to be a BOCES, but I really feel that it's got to be that type of a thing.

"I had a lot of trouble with this," said Mrs. Wlordarek. "They were going to have a separate (Board of Governance) and that was okay, except because the classes they were talking about were going to take place in the Fredonia school system facility, the final say had to come from the Fredonia School Board. Now I can understand that, and I know that it's right, but it's not fair. That's why I say even geographically, it has to be a more neutral setting, so that everyone had equal representation."

Mrs. Wlordarek said that even though Fredonia would have the same amount of representation on the School of Excellence board as other participating schools, Fredonia would actually be represented by all the Fredonia Board of Education members in addition to the School of Excellence board member. "The (Fredonia) board, because of their physical facilities, has the final say," she said. "They've got to get away from that type of thinking. I don't think they'll ever get the community to buy it."

A local administrator gave his perspective on the project's strong identification with Fredonia. "The project had the wrong start politically, in that it was identified from the very beginning as a Fredonia Central School district project," he said. "I think that made a lot of other school districts suspicious. It would have been more acceptable if it had somehow come through the BOCES concept. But because it came up as a Fredonia project, it came across that the school would be located in the Fredonia Central School district (and) this alienated a number of school boards."

The administrator noted that if there could have been more school districts involved, it would have demonstrated an even greater need for the School of Excellence than what had already been identified. However, some districts chose not to become involved "because they were turned off from the very beginning. The (Fredonia) school district enjoys a certain amount of status of and by itself. People tend to put Fredonia on a special level. Something like this simply alienated (the other districts) more. I think if it had come through BOCES they might have been a little more accepting of

it."

So, politically speaking, there were some individuals who felt that the program may have been more successful if it had been run on "neutral" ground, such as through the BOCES. In more general terms, depending on the "politics" of a given situation, the location and leadership of such a program can become a factor impinging upon its success. However, in the case of the Fredonia project, which was never implemented, the true impact of such a concern was never actually determined. "The reason it (the School of Excellence) didn't go was funding," said Skip Palmer. "The fact that it didn't go was not a function of who was running it, it was a function of funding."

"It's too bad that people couldn't have gotten beyond that (identification with Fredonia)," said Thomas Heary, Fredonia High School Principal. "The perception was that this was a project of the superintendent of schools and many people spent their time reacting to that, as opposed to the idea of a Regional High School of Excellence. You have to reach a point where you look beyond who is presenting the material and look at the concept."

Acceptance of the Regional High School of Excellence Concept

Acceptance of the Regional High School of Excellence concept by educators and the public at large was a significant issue. According to the project's surveys, it appeared that the concept was accepted by more than 85 percent of parents of bright students, by more than 70 percent of local businesses and industries, by more than 60 percent of the general public, and by more than 40 percent of educators.

Concerns expressed by the general public included:

1) Worry that their taxes would have been raised to pay for it.

2) Uneasiness about the use of the term "excellence" to describe the proposed school and the concomitant corollary that regular public high schools provide something less than excellent programs.

3) Lack of understanding that the type of program to be provided would have been <u>different</u> from but not <u>better</u> than what is offered in the local high schools.

4) Rejection of the idea that our most academically able students are entitled to special attention of

any kind.

5) Rejection of the idea of a separate school.

6) Fear that this kind of school would produce an intellectual elite.

7) Fear that students in the Regional High School of Excellence would no longer identify with their home school and community.

Along with the concerns listed above, educators expressed these additional concerns:

1) Provision of a specialized program for the brightest students is an indication that the local schools are not able to perform their educational tasks satisfactorily.

2) Removal of the top students from the class would remove the very ones who can be depended upon to make the best contributions to the class.

3) Removal of the top students from some classes would have reduced their size, which in small high schools make the difference between being able to offer or having to cancel a course due to enrollment.

4) Average and slow thinking students alike benefit from exposure to the local school districts for programs to benefit all students.

5) The money for the program should be given to the local school districts for programs to benefit all students.

Some of these individual concerns are discussed in later sections of this chapter. The list above shows the concerns that, as a whole, had a bearing on the acceptance levels of the School of Excellence concept.

"I felt the people furthest from education, in some ways, were the most supportive of the project, and those people closest to education were perhaps the least supportive," said Fredonia High School Principal Tom Heary. "The big concern among those close to education was this idea of draining, in their words taking out, skimming off if you will, the top students and losing them from their schools and their classes. There was a question as to how that would affect the student and how that would affect the school.

"I felt that at the business (community) level that was not as much of a concern. The idea kind of made some sense

to them (business people)," said Mr. Heary. "It's too bad that we (are) in kind of a downward spiral economically. I think if more things were happening economically in the area, they would have been (even) more receptive to the idea. We were ready for that next step; to have people go out, call on the businessmen, be more specific to them about what we wanted. It would have been the kind of thing that we could have held up as an attraction to the area as an example of cooperation between business and education. But it never came off," he said.

The fact that Dunkirk, the other large district in the region, did not participate, put the project at a decided disadvantage from the start. Dunkirk and Fredonia are neighboring school districts with a natural and longstanding sense of rivalry. The demographics on which some of that "rivalry" is based, however, are not unique to the Dunkirk-Fredonia area. The same would be true anywhere you have "a college community in an agrarian area," said Skip Palmer. "The demographics are that management, professors and so on tend to live more in Fredonia, and the blue collar or 'employee' tends to live more in Dunkirk. That rivalry is historic, and not just historic with regard to this community. I could (show) you 40 other places in the state and repeat the same demographics," he said.

An ongoing problem during the project was that educators were the group least supportive of the School of Excellence concept. "Some teachers see education for the gifted as elitist education," said educational planner Judith Deiulio. "Not all teachers are that way. But (some) feel you are just trying to provide frosting on the cake (for gifted students) and there are no goodies for the other kids. It's a different education, not a better one," she said.

Dr. Merrins noted that among educators, "there was a wide diversity of opinion on the program. Some educators thought it was an idea whose time had come, some thought it was all wrong," he said. "A lot were against it, and many of the reasons given were not child-centered. When they really got down to talking about it they said 'Yes, we have a gifted population, yes, they should be served, no, I'm not sending my students because that's not what's best for us. My school won't support it because you will be taking the best students.' Teachers would sometimes (say) 'who's going to answer the questions if these students are removed from the class?' I feel that the response was not, 'what is best for kids,' but, 'what is best for the organization,'" he said.

This particular problem was not unique to the Northern Chautauqua project. Other projects across the state experienced similar difficulties. Mr. Samuel Corsi, coordinator of the Office of Federal Demonstration Programs at the New York State Education Department, was the project

supervisor at the state level. "There was a lot of negativism on the part of the educational community," Mr. Corsi said. "People were afraid that the better students would be siphoned off and they would be left in their schools with students they didn't consider to be the best. That is to say, you like a good mix, and they wouldn't have that top layer of mix."

Mr. Corsi also said there were other, related concerns. "There was a feeling that many of the best teachers would be siphoned, particularly if there was some way to offer them more money for this particular type of school. There was great concern with the logistics and transportation issue, and there was great concern about funding. Many people said to us, by way of the (project) reports, 'Instead of focusing all these funds on these few students, why don't you give some money to each school and let them come up with ways to improve the quality of their own programs for these very special gifted and talented students?" he said.

Dr. Donald McFarland, professor of education at SUNY Fredonia, had a rather strong attitude toward some educators who opposed the Regional High School concept. "I felt the criticism was coming from the right people, in some cases," he said. "If some of them were criticizing the (School of Excellence) idea, it had to be worth investigating."

An added concern to the Fredonia teaching staff was how locating the School of Excellence in the Fredonia facility would affect them. "They wondered how that was going to affect space," said Mr. Heary. "Territoriality comes into play here. A lot of these very human kinds of concerns come into play."

Ms. Joan Caruso, Fredonia high school English teacher, felt that there was a greater need for sensitivity to the feelings of the students and staff at Fredonia. "To those of us to whom this is home, this (School of Excellence) became an intrusive element," she said. "I think (that for) any project of this type, where you are moving into an already existent school base, you have to be very sensitive to the feelings of the people who are there. It has to be done very diplomatically. I think (in) any future attempts, you would really have to be sensitive to that."

Public Relations

The purpose of public relations is to inform. People are presented with information, and then make their own decisions on an issue based on this information. A lack of understanding about an issue or topic is often the root of opposition to that issue or topic. The necessity of educating people so that they could come to understand and

support the concept was recognized and acted upon from the early stages of the project. Irene Talarico, Fredonia Board of Education member who also served on the Curriculum Committee, said, "It was hard. It's hard to explain something that's not concrete. If you're offering a program on creative arts and it's offered Monday from 7 to 9 and this is the theme, then that's easy to interpret to the public."

The School of Excellence project was a complex one, and required extensive coverage. However, in some instances, the coverage was thought to have been too extensive. Forestville Superintendent William Loftus said, "I guess I did have a feeling there was a slight overkill. I think maybe (it) got too much publicity in the paper. . .for something that was really a dream. And I think with that overkill it soured some people. People started not reading the articles in the paper," he said.

"The newspapers were more than adequately informed about what was happening," said Silver Creek superintendent James Goodspeed. "As a matter of fact, I think that's half of what killed it in many peoples' minds - it was simply an oversell. You couldn't open the local newspaper without seeing something that night about the High School of Excellence, and we got sick of it. It was a constant irritant to the faculty, I must say. The more they (the faculty) thought about and heard about the High School of Excellence, the more they felt that the public was starting to look at it (as though), 'We aren't doing a very good job. What can be done to save the youngsters from us?' That's an overstatement of the perception, but that was running through everybody's reaction to this, the constant bubbling of this High School of Excellence pot. And I really just think that it was a terrible case of oversell," he said.

The number of press releases was not the only concern expressed about the School of Excellence public relations effort. Mr. Douglas LeBarron, Forestville school board member, agreed that there was plenty of information presented to the public through the press releases. But, he felt that many people lacked the background knowledge to understand the rather lofty and complex articles that appeared. "The public in general lacks knowledge of how a school system works," he said, "much less how this new concept was working." Mr. LeBarron suggested that the releases should have been "geared lower", written with the assumption that those reading them would need basic explanations about how the program would work and how it could affect each reader or each family.

There were several types of articles that appeared in the newspapers. One type, which was based entirely on press releases, reported on project activities and progress. Another was based on presentations given at board meetings or to the general public, and these were written by reporters

who attended the meetings. These presentations were done by Dr. Merrins, who clearly and concisely explained the project and the concept behind it. But, as Skip Palmer pointed out, "When you get something out of the paper, to some degree, you get the quotes that someone else thought were significant. In all fairness to the reporter, it was what the reporter felt was interesting reading." This may have contributed to an incomplete understanding of the project by many people.

Dr. Merrins' presentations were an important part of the total public relations effort. The presentations also required an extensive time commitment on his part. "He certainly made himself available to the schools and communities to inform them about the project," said Mr. Heary.

The timing of the presentations may have been a problem, because they were undertaken after the project had been underway for a while. Mr. Palmer commented that if Dr. Merrins had gone out right at the point of application for the grant, it might have been helpful in dispelling certain rumors surrounding the project. Most notable were rumors that the real purpose of the project was to employ Fredonia teachers in the face of declining enrollments, or that Fredonia had more bright students than they could handle in a regular classroom setting.

"A lot of feelings developed, just in the application period and the commitment period," said Mr. Palmer. It might have been helpful to the project image if Dr. Merrins had been able to get the "message out there sooner," he said, adding that "emotions took over before the logic could be explained." There was enough time between the application process and Dr. Merrins' presentations that "emotions were already fully developed before logic could be brought in."

Not only opponents of the project but proponents as well, often seemed to put emotion before logic. Dr. A. Cutler Silliman, Fredonia board of education member, noted that this was a problem at an open debate on the School of Excellence proposal which took place at the New York State School Boards' Association convention in the fall of 1986. Dr. Silliman said that most of the people who spoke in favor of the School of Excellence did not do a very good job because what they were saying was emotionally based, and did not have enough supporting factual information. Many of the comments were based on the "We've got to give these kids a chance. . ." theme, and lacked the substance needed to build a strong case. Dr. Silliman said, "I wanted to speak as representing an area that was actually pursuing the idea. I thought that would be a different insight." However, time ran out before he had a chance to speak about the work of the Fredonia project.

Public relations is an essential element of a project such as the School of Excellence. However, attention must be given to the timing, frequency and tone of public relations efforts in order to ensure that they achieve maximum effectiveness.

Problem With Definitions

There were two major definition problems with the project. One had to do with defining and presenting the Regional High School of Excellence concept, and the other had to do with the definition of a gifted student.

The definition of the School of Excellence was difficult to pin down because there was no actual school. The project was essentially studying the feasibility of starting such a school, and could not always answer questions about specific details regarding the school or its students. "People jumped very quickly from the idea to specifics," said Mr. Heary. "'What room are they (the students) going to be in? Who is going to teach them? What about Regents exams?' As one person said to Mrs. Deiulio, 'What happens when they miss the morning announcements?' It's amazing, all kinds of little details," he said.

There were things that the School of Excellence wasn't. Enrichment, acceleration, and extra work are all often associated with education for the gifted. However, each of these things alone does not constitute a total program for gifted students. The School of Excellence was envisioned as a total, unique program that would challenge students across a broad range of subject areas and topics, and provide an opportunity for total immersion in the problem or problems being studied. The student would have increasing freedom of choice in pursuing areas of interest as he progressed through the program, but was also expected to exhibit a certain amount of rigor in approaching his studies, both group and individual. The School of Excellence program was also going to be geared to each student's own special needs and abilities. All students would not be going through an identical program for four years in order to receive a special diploma at the end.

Dr. Merrins attempted to clarify some of the confusion that seemed to surround the School of Excellence concept. "We used to have all the bright students and all the regular students in the same class. We would tell them all to do problems 1 through 20. But the bright student says, 'Give me three problems. I'll do #18, #19 and #20 to prove I don't have to go through all of them.' But what we do is give the bright students 40 of the same problems to do. We haven't provided any more education, we've just provided work. Well, that's a great model if you're on the assembly line, and you

say, 'Hey, build twice as many automobiles.' But that's not education," he said. "Let's not confuse mass productivity with the education of the gifted child."

The Networking Committee in particular had a problem with the definition (or lack of one) when they made their initial attempts to gain support from the business community. Again, because the School of Excellence was at that point a concept, there was no real "product" the committee could "sell". Farther along in the planning process, when the school had assumed a more definite shape in terms of such things as curriculum, staffing and student selection procedures, the Networking Committee members felt more confident about contacting business people. Though local businesses and industries did indicate their support of the School of Excellence concept, Networking Committee members were frustrated in not being able to provide more specific details about the school at the time. In addition, there were never any definite answers about how the school would be funded.

The second problem focused on defining the gifted student. This was difficult because there is no one set definition that has evolved from research in this area. There are many types of giftedness, and it is difficult to define them in one, concise statement. Terms of a general nature often have to be used out of necessity in order to avoid excluding one or another type of giftedness.

Student Selection Committee member Faith Scott said, "I think we talked around our definition of gifted. If we were repeating this (project), I think the first thing we would have to come to grips with is an absolutely concrete definition of gifted. We had a lot of exploring to do, and you don't do that until you get a sense of where other people are coming from."

"(The definition of the Regional High School of Excellence students) became much broader and harder to define than when we started," said Tana Wlodarek, Student Selection committee member. "It started out (that) the group was thinking in terms of predominately intellectual." Mrs. Wlodarek noted that, as other committee members began to bring in different ideas, "we began to realize that there are some other areas where a student needs to be challenged to excel." She pointed out that, for instance, there may be some students who are really creative in music, but may not have outstanding grades in math. "As we began to think about that, then it became more difficult to really zero in on who and what this student is, or should be."

Mrs. Wlodarek said that she really didn't have a personal definition of gifted. "I learned from working on that committee that I really don't know what gifted is," she

said. "Einstein was gifted, Mozart was gifted, but they certainly weren't the same type of person. What is gifted? I don't know. It's an outstanding ability in some area, and those areas are as many as there are characteristics in a personality."

Dr. Merrins summed up his ideas on what a gifted student is. "(A gifted student) has the ability to put different parts together in unique and different ways to form new combinations. It's not simple. It's not just acceleration: it's not just going faster. It's the ability to process the information and use it in new ways, so that there is a new product," he said.

Only the use of general terms will encompass the entire population of gifted individuals. Beyond that, it would seem that the definition of a gifted student lies more with the identification of individual characteristics and talents than anything else.

Elitism

A consistent criticism leveled against the Regional High School of Excellence was that it would create an intellectually elite group. This criticism was probably rooted in a lack of a true understanding of the School of Excellence concept and the fact the concept was an untried one that had not yet been able to prove itself.

Dr. Theodore Steinberg, professor of English at SUNY Fredonia, gave an example of the difference in acceptance levels between 'proven' concepts, and as yet 'unproven' ones. "A fellow got up at an educational conference and said something like, 'We ought to take the best students, and get special teachers for them, and special equipment, and get buses to take them around to different places.' He went on and on about all the special things they should do for these kids. Finally somebody said, 'We can't do that.' The other fellow replied, 'Well, we do it already. It's called our athletics program.'

"I think that's true," Dr. Steinberg said. " I don't want to do anything to the detriment of any of the (other) students. What I think we should do is make things available for the (gifted) students who can handle them."

Franklin Russell, Pine Valley Superintendent, had been confronted with charges of elitism through his school's elementary program for gifted students. "We had to address that very early, he said, "and we addressed it by ignoring it. We simply said it's no more elitist than the kid who can play a trombone or the kid who's the star quarterback on the football team or the boy who can run faster and jump

higher or the girl who can shoot better or whatever - there's all kinds of elitism out there.

"What's wrong with being elite?" he continued. "Is there something wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with going to the University of Chicago when you're 15 if you have that ability, is there? I mean, come on, is there something wrong with that? We're supposed to teach mediocrity? If you could tell me what's wrong with elitism, maybe we could argue about it."

Dr. Leanna Dunst, psychology instructor at SUNY Fredonia, and Student Selection committee member, was disturbed by criticisms of elitism leveled at the High School of Excellence concept. "That really angers me, because I don't think it's elitism to give every kid an opportunity to fulfill their potential," she said. "I think it's stupid to make kids with a lot of ability waste years of their life sitting in classrooms going over things that they could pick up so much more quickly, or that they already know, right at a time when they could be absorbing so much and growing so much. I think it's mean and stupid, and I don't think it's elitist at all to put those kids in an environment where they can really learn. It's only fair -that's exactly how I feel about it. And like I said before, I think it's so shortsighted. . . because those are the kids who could contribute so much (to society)."

"It (the School of Excellence) had some bad connotations from the local legislators of smacking of elitism, and some of the teachers felt that way about it, but I didn't think they fully understood the situation," said Chuck McMillen, Ripley school board member, who also sat on the Curriculum Committee. "Maybe it had elitist aspects to it, but what we were hearing is, 'Oh, you're going to take all the good people and leave us with the riffraff,' and yet those are the same people who were saying, 'Well, I'd love to teach to the norm,' if the opportunity was given to them." Fellow committee member Ralph Scazafabo, Ripley high school principal, pointed out that the research shows that, frequently, the top students in the classroom "get pulled down to the norm of the peer group."

Dr. Donald McFarland, also a member of the Curriculum Committee, and a professor of education at SUNY Fredonia, commented, "I started saying to people (that) if you're against this whole idea, develop your own program, and let the students vote with their feet the way college students always do. If there's a good program next door, you'll go next door, that's it. Let's have a little free enterprise in the educational system. I thought it would have been healthy for everybody, because I don't see how schools could have ignored the existence of this program. They would have had to change," he said.

Other people who were involved with the project saw the elitism issue differently. Tom Heary said that he was concerned about it, but, "I don't think it bothered me as much as it did some other people. We take kids now and we send them to BOCES for a half-day for occupational education programs, and we certainly don't talk in terms of that being a program of elitism - just the opposite. It has a very negative connotation. We have kids from the high school now who take college courses, and we don't refer to that as a program of elitism," he said.

"I think any time a parent sends their child to a private school you hear some of that talk of elitism," Mr. Heary continued. "But, I felt that the transportation issue for people was more of a problem than this elitism thing; the idea of having to ride buses and travel a long way and so on."

Westfield Superintendent Robert Olczak offered another perspective. "I don't know that (the Regional High School) would foster elitism so much, but we really are trying to challenge our top level students. There's a line of thinking that they are our future leaders of tomorrow and everything we can do for them, we should make an attempt to do. Our job here is to teach kids, and my personal philosophy is that you get them at the level they are and try to take them as far along as you can. That goes for the lower children as well as the middle functioning and the higher functioning kids," he said.

The basic purpose of the School of Excellence was to provide academically talented students with a program geared to their special needs and abilities. Mr. Olczak summarized the issue this way; "If we could better provide an educational program for them (gifted students), which is the line of thinking for the other avenues, vocational or special education, then I think it holds true also for your academically high level students."

Use of the Word "Excellence"

"The language (i.e., the name of the program) presented a problem across the many projects, and I can't really tell you where that came from," said Sam Corsi, project coordinator with the State Education Department. "It was given to me when I was given the assignment. We were sort of stuck with it."

Dr. Neil Foley, special assistant to the governor, said the governor's staff came up with the title, and that he was aware that the use of the word "excellence" in the names of the schools was controversial. "People drew an invidious

comparison on that word," he said, noting that critics thought "excellence" implied that other schools are not excellent as well. "We were not trying to draw that comparison. We were just trying to be zealous in drawing attention to the school. I don't think changing the name would have changed the eventual outcome," he said.

Sam Corsi made a similar point. "Part of the problem in the feasibility study was that people began to feel that if we were planning for a regional high school of excellence to deal with gifted and talented students around particular subject areas, what were we doing in the local schools? And of course it was never meant to say that. It was meant to say that if you (took) kids with a particular expertise, or interest, or talent, and you put them together in a location and brought specific resources to bear in that situation, they probably could move at an accelerated speed. And that's all it was meant to say. Of course everybody read a lot of other stuff into it, which is unavoidable. Probably 'excellence' would not have been a choice had we stopped and considered other language. But, like everything else, you can do better in hindsight than you could at the time," he said.

Dr. A. Cutler Silliman said, "I think had this project continued, it would have had to find another name."

Renaming the school was frequently discussed, as most committee members disliked use of the word "excellence." Many suggestions were made, but a satisfactory replacement was never found. The best solution, as suggested at a Board of Governance meeting, may have been to let the first class of students at the Regional High School of Excellence decide on a new name for the school.

Need for a Regional High School of Excellence

One of the first tasks in the entire study project process was to determine the feasibility and need for a Regional High School of Excellence. The primary methods used to determine a need for a School of Excellence were a review of gifted education efforts in the county to date (fall 1985), a survey of schools participating in the study project, a survey of parents of academically able students, and discussions held with business, industry and higher education representatives, superintendents, boards of education, parents, teachers and students.

Regional efforts in the areas of gifted education in Northern Chautauqua County date back to 1977. In May of that year, a small group of concerned parents and educators formed the Chautauqua County Association for the Gifted to work as an advocacy group. That fall, BOCES obtained a small grant

to gather data on gifted education which would assist local districts in planning to meet the educational needs of these students.

In 1979 the Chautauqua County BOCES was awarded an ESEA IV-C grant to provide support services (information dissemination, resource materials, in-service training and technical assistance) in gifted education to 45 school districts in three counties. The project's final report noted as a problem:

> While the number of students presently being served represents 30 percent of the total K-12 estimated gifted population, since most of the students being served are at the K-6 level, it can be estimated that nearly 50 percent of the region's elementary level gifted population is presently served through a program. However, very few programs have been developed at the secondary level. . .

Since 1984, the Chautauqua County School Boards' Association has obtained legislative grants to provide two-week summer enrichment programs for students in grades 4-12 in the county's schools. This program has served students with high ability and high interest in four areas: field biology, computers, studio art and drama. While interest in the program is very high at the high school level, the program's planners have experienced some difficulty in enrolling high school students, not only because of conflicts with family vacation plans, but also because many students are enrolled in summer driver's education programs or hold summer jobs.

An additional regional program has been developed in an attempt to serve the needs of some very able secondary students. In cooperation with the State University of New York College at Fredonia, many of the schools participate in a 3-1-3 program, in which qualified seniors take part of their high school work in the home school and up to three courses each semester at SUNY Fredonia, receiving both high school credit and up to 30 hours of college credit. One difficulty noted with this program is that students must provide their own transportation to and from the college campus and this effectively limits their participation.

BOCES currently operates the ORBITT (Opportunity to Realize Better Ideas Through Thinking) program for gifted students in grades two through six, which students attend one day a week. Doug LeBarron, Forestville school board member, said, "Most of the schools send their children to BOCES.

(But) once they reach the seventh grade, that's it." Mr. LeBarron went on to say that once gifted students reach high school, there are no special provisions made for them. "What do you do with (the student)? He becomes a troublemaker in most instances, or a recluse, one of the two," he said.

Fredonia superintendent James Merrins said, "Basically, there are no programs for gifted students at the secondary grade levels. Those educators who say they have programs for the gifted are usually talking about honors programs or advanced placement courses. These are not appropriate programs for the gifted.

"I believe that gifted education is a set of programs that respond to a group of students who have unique behaviors," Dr. Merrins continued. "These students have behaviors that need to be encouraged. . . and the way to encourage them is by providing a specialized curriculum to match their needs."

Dr. A. Cutler Silliman said he was acquainted with an academically gifted student, who was a classic underachiever. "He just barely graduated. . . yet he was a National Merit finalist on test scores. That is precisely the kind of child who we don't reach in the public schools. We can't because we don't have the funds," he said. "I was hoping that through this type of school we would reach some of them in each school district. It's a small number who could be served, it's a small number who should be served, and out of that, it's a small number who would be," he said. Dr. Silliman noted that there is always the risk of excluding a student who should be in such a program, but said, "By not having it, we are excluding them all."

Dr. Silliman said that gifted students are not necessarily worthy of special recognition, but they are entitled to special educational opportunities. "I'm not sure (the gifted) deserve anything," he said. "I think they need something."

Idea That Gifted "Can Take Care of Themselves"

When stating the case for the need for a Regional High School of Excellence, one response sometimes heard was that such a school was not needed because gifted students, by virtue of their superior abilities, can take care of themselves, and will be successful despite being locked into a program that does not really meet their needs. Giftedness, however, does not always automatically blossom on its own. "These students have to be encouraged in society," said Dr. Merrins. "This is a potential wealth in our society. If we can identify individuals who have special abilities, and encourage them, making sure they aren't lost, they can serve

the society in special ways," he said. "Giftedness is something you improve on. Giftedness in a child is really a potential, which may or may not be realized."

"Their needs for a comprehensive program are similar to handicapped students," continued Dr. Merrins. "You can't send them to class to learn only one subject. They need a comprehensive, on-going program. What you need to do is match the gifted student with an educational program. It's not going down the hall to take class in something of interest. It's not dropping in on a course. It's thinking about the entire curriculum," he said.

Chuck McMillen said, "When there are only so many dollars to go around, the advanced educational aspects get left in the dust. Because there's a perception out there that a superior student will always be superior, no matter what type of an environment he has to get his education in. I don't think that's exactly true. I thought there were a lot of children who deserved more." Curriculum Committee member Renee Cope added that the research the committee studied showed it to be untrue that gifted students are able to "take care of themselves."

The State Education Department does recognize that the gifted student population requires services, at least to some degree. Dr. Merrins pointed out that money is provided for school districts each year for gifted and talented students. "It's so much per pupil times three percent of your total student population," he said. "They've increased the allocation a couple of times. School districts get to use that money however they wish, for gifted - identifying students, selecting students, or providing programs. A small amount of money doesn't buy programs, but it's seed money for materials, for some study and some research materials.

"While gifted education hasn't become a separate discipline," Dr. Merrins continued, "there are certainly programs being put together in various areas to educate some of these students and provide them with services. (Some) school districts have hired itinerant teachers for the gifted. It's another indicator of education doing something where nothing was done previously.

"There are indications of a subtle shift in philosophy," said Dr. Merrins. "First, there was awareness that gifted kids need services, and then you see small attempts at serving them. As programs meet with success, there are usually larger attempts, and it grows. It takes a long time before you see major shifts. People have to become accustomed to an idea. It can take a long time before they accept it."

Pull-Out Problem

The Northern Chautauqua County School of Excellence project was structured as a half-day shared program. Students would be away from their home school each morning attending School of Excellence classes. The students would return to their own schools each afternoon for additional classes required for graduation from high school. Pulling the students out of their home school each day was perceived in different ways. Some were opposed to it, some had reservations about it and some were in favor of it.

Opposition to the pull-out aspect of the School of Excellence program seemed to come mainly from individuals who were not directly involved with the project. In an article that appeared in the December 19, 1985 Dunkirk-Fredonia "Evening Observer," area educators stated their views on the subject. "All agreed that programs to aid bright students are needed - but all agreed that segregating the "gifted" from their peers is not the best method." There were several reasons given for this viewpoint. One was that ". . .pulling out cuts into the time spent on 'focused, directed study' because of the travel time." Also noted were scheduling difficulties, and the coordination of a student's studies between the home school and the School of Excellence.

One education professor commented that "Whenever you sift people out, there is always the danger of psychological complications for them and their peers."

Another professor said that putting bright students together allows them to advance more rapidly and learn from their peers. It also allows for more individualized instruction. However, this same professor also noted that "pulling out removes 'the good models' from their peers, makes teachers feel like 'they're not qualified' and is viewed by society as elitist."

Some members of the Curriculum Committee felt differently about gifted students being good "role models" for other students. They felt that sometimes, the exact opposite may be true. Gifted students who are bored in a regular classroom setting may behave in a manner the teacher does not want modeled in other students. Committee members noted that the behavior of gifted students can sometimes be "atrocious", and that they can be "haughty" and "arrogant."

Others had strong feelings about gifted students being "used" to help promote the learning process of the other students in the classroom. Dr. Donald McFarland, professor of education at SUNY Fredonia, said, "I felt a lot of people looked at the gifted children in their classrooms as teaching aides and resources, which I found appalling. People do not

send their kids to school to be teaching aides to other people's children."

Dr. Merrins had similar feelings. He said he felt that whether or not removing the bright students from the class would diminish the "learning experience" for the rest of the students is up to the teacher. "Is the gifted student there to be educated, or to provide some service? If he is there to provide service, then why don't we pay the gifted students?" he said. "The whole extrapolation of that concept becomes ridiculous. Gifted students are supposed to be receiving an appropriate education, just like the other students. If they are being 'used', they aren't being educated."

People had mixed feelings about pulling students out of their home schools for a ha'f day. However, because of limited resources, a regional school seemed to be the only practical means of providing these students with the specialized program they need.

"I'm always torn," said Faith Scott. "Is it better to have the gifted student as part of the whole high school? Doesn't it give an impetus to the kids that are there? I know that's how a lot of high school principals and superintendents feel, and I can sympathize with it. On the other hand, most of our high schools cannot supply the challenge that is needed by a gifted child," she said. "So unless you live in a large city where they have special schools for the gifted student or the very bright kid, I think you are going to have to make do."

Robert Olczak, Westfield superintendent, commented on having students leave their home school for a half-day to attend the School of Excellence. He said that they already send students out for a half-day for the vocational education programs at BOCES, and a full day for the ORBITT program. "In a rural area, that's a fact of life in a small school," he said.

Dr. Susan Newman, Curriculum Committee and Student Selection Committee member, said, "I had some reservations about students being taken out of their school district, but since that was the way the proposal was written, that was the way we had to go. Since there was no option to do something in separate school districts, we had to go with the opportunity that we had," she said. "There wouldn't be too many (students) in each school, and that's why if anything else was done, it would have to be done on an itinerant basis and then you're not really giving the child a whole program. You're just there to kind of help them along in some areas."

Another perspective on the pull-out aspect of the School

of Excellence program had to do with shifting social structures within the classroom if the 'top' students were removed. "One of the things that has been evident is when the top students go out of the classroom, the ones in the next rank take on a new responsibility and new leaders emerge," said Judith Deiulio, educational planner.

Dr. Theodore Steinberg, professor of English at SUNY Fredonia, viewed the pull-out issue in a similar manner. "There was a fear that if you take the bright kids out of a class, what's going to happen to the others? I think that's a legitimate question, but since it's never done, no one knows. One possibility is that if you take the brightest kids, or the ones who talk the most, out of a class, the ones who are a little restrained because they are overshadowed by these bright kids will come to the top. So it would be a good opportunity for them too. That's a possibility, I don't know if it works. Since nobody ever does it, we don't know."

Dr. Leanna Dunst, psychology instructor at SUNY Fredonia, said, "Some people say that it's going to take away from the classroom if you pull the kids off the top. I don't think it would change that much, in fact it might give some other people some room to feel they were at the top, and they might participate more. I think to hold somebody back on that excuse is a pretty flimsy reason to hold somebody back from doing what they can do. I'm not so sure they are making that much difference to everyone else - they may be intimidating everyone else if they are being a real active participant," she said.

Dr. Merrins said, "Every child has a right to an appropriate education. Will taking them out of the class change the class? Sure, every time you take five students out of any class and put five others in we change the class; we do that all the time. We don't say we aren't going to have any honors classes, or Regents classes, because the non-Regents students suffer from not being there. No one said, 'Hey, don't take the handicapped students out of my class because they are an important part.' It's a selfishness on the part of the organization to keep the gifted in classes below their abilities, as though these gifted students are little gold chips we are supposed to collect," he said. "In reality they are a student with a particular behavior who needs to be provided an appropriate educational program. That's where we are failing them."

Accreditation of the Program

The problem of accreditation of the program was significant to parents and students. Because the School of Excellence was to be new, and at least in the beginning, an "experimental" program, concerns were raised about the

acceptance of the work at other educational institutions. Parents also wanted assurance about several other aspects of the School of Excellence program. Parents needed to know that:

1) The program will be an integral part of, not an addition to, the student's total program.

2) The program will be "traditional" in terms of the core curriculum, credits fulfilled and grades earned by students.

3) Students will be able to take Regents exams and earn a Regents diploma.

4) Colleges will accept work completed at the school, and students will not be penalized in the admissions process for having attended what might be viewed as an "experimental" school.

It was anticipated that the program planned for the School of Excellence would not have required significant derivation from either current Education Law or the Commissioner's Regulations.

Many of the courses that were to be developed for the School of Excellence would have been interdisciplinary, and may have fallen short of the requirement for 180 minutes of instruction per week. However, students would have been expected to pass Regents examinations in those courses required to achieve a Regents diploma. In addition, it was anticipated that new courses of study would have been submitted to the State Education Department for approval. Also, some students might have taken advantage of the current option in the regulations of earning up to 6 1/2 units of credit toward the Regents diploma through alternative instruction.

Students would take Regents exams as they became ready for them. It was anticipated that some students may have taken the exams somewhat earlier in their schooling than if they were enrolled in a more 'traditional' program. Parents were assured that the state would grant Regents credit for courses offered by the School of Excellence even though a student may not have completed the total number of classroom hours currently required by the regulations.

The School of Excellence would grant credit to students for completion of courses in the core areas of English, social studies, science and mathematics. As stated previously, the courses would have been interdisciplinary. Credit would have been given for separate, traditional courses, and grades would have correlated with the grading system in the student's home school.

Credits earned at the School of Excellence would have appeared on the student's home school transcript, and therefore would be acceptable to colleges. It was noted that attendance at the school could be viewed as an asset, not a hindrance, in the college admissions process if the Board of Regents or governor were to grant a special diploma to the school's students.

Accreditation is an important factor in the acceptance of the School of Excellence program as a viable one. Accreditation issues should be addressed as early as possible in program planning in order to reassure both parents and potential students of program validity.

Student Perspectives

The majority of planners involved in the School of Excellence study project were adults. The project was never developed to the point at which it actively involved those whom it was intended to serve: the students.

There were several high school students who sat on the working committees. The only other direct student involvement with the project was the 30 middle school students who took part in the pilot test of the student selection process. Despite the limited participation of students in the total planning process, they did have their own viewpoints on the Regional High School of Excellence.

Middle school student Kathleen Ulrich said, "I thought it would be fun, because it would be more of a challenge than regular school." Fellow middle school student Mike Flagella said, "I think most kids like a challenge." He commented that the Regional High School of Excellence might be a "better education for some of the higher level kids. Instead of staying at the same level with everybody else, they could be up a little higher," he said.

Mike was told that the Student Selection Committee was very interested in finding students who had become disillusioned with school because it was too easy, or who tried to hide their intelligence so other kids wouldn't make fun of them. His response was, "Well, I'm one of them, sometimes. I know a couple kids like that. I think the Regional High School of Excellence would be a place for them to show what they've got."

Gillian Steinberg and Dave Wozniak, both middle school students, talked about how the regular classroom can seem too slow for the bright student. Gillian said she thought the Regional High School of Excellence sounded like a "neat" idea. "It would be more fun because we wouldn't have to

waste time in class," she said. Gillian and Dave both mentioned several subject areas where they felt the teachers go too slowly. Gillian felt there was a need for a School of Excellence, "especially if the other kids need to go slower. Then they can have the teacher go over it for them as many times as they want without feeling guilty that they are making other kids wait." Gillian continued, "I know some kids who feel guilty about it and they won't ask questions because they don't want to hold the teacher back."

Dave and Gillian talked about bright students being treated differently by the teachers, and by other students. Their comments shed some interesting insights into the everyday reality of this problem. Dave said, "If they answer a lot of questions. . .(the teacher) will rely on them. We won't raise our hands in Social Studies because one kid always answers the questions and the teacher always calls on him."

Gillian said, "Kids make fun of (the smartest students)." She then went on to talk about how teachers also treat bright students differently. "If someone who always gets good grades were to get an 'A', and we have to read our grades out loud, and they say 'A', then he would just mark it down. But someone who usually fails on a test, and then got a 'B', he would say 'B', and (the teacher) would say, 'Come up and let me see it.' It makes him real embarrassed because it's true, they wouldn't lie about their grades. It makes me mad that they would trust someone because of their record and then not trust someone else at all, and they have to check their papers themselves."

Overall, Dave and Gillian felt the Regional High School of Excellence was a good idea. "It would have been good, seeing all the other kids from other schools, seeing how smart they are too," Dave said. Gillian said that the School of Excellence "sounded like something better, more interesting."

Scott Palmer, another middle school student, described how he can tell who the smartest students are. "Well, I think it depends on how well they answer a question that they never heard the answer to before, or a new subject, and they can just put one and one together and make two from things they already know, that's one way." He went on to say that "Grades do help. Some don't get their homework done but do good on tests."

The students also talked about the pilot testing process in which they participated: filling out the application and taking the SAT. The general feeling about the application form was that it took a while to fill out, and that the essay questions were not easy. "They made you think," Gillian said.

The general feeling about taking the SAT was that it was a difficult test, and there was a lot of material on it with which the students were not familiar. One student said that the orientation session provided by Mrs. Deiulio had been helpful, because they knew ahead of time that it would be a hard test. Dave Wozniak said, "It was hard. It was fair, but it was hard. What else could you do? It was a good idea to do that."

Scott Palmer said that he "liked taking the SATs and all that stuff." Scott also added, "It is sort of nice to be told you are smart even though you don't think you are," indicating that he was very surprised that he was asked to participate in the pilot test.

Students of high school age, who would were already too old to be considered for the School of Excellence, still had their own viewpoints on such a school. Articles written by students about the school appeared in some high school newspapers. Feelings about the School of Excellence seemed to be mixed. One article published in the Fredonia High School student newspaper included anonymous quotes from several students who were against the idea of a School of Excellence:

"What do I think about this Regional High School of Excellence? I think it's dumb. They shouldn't segregate kids. Everyone should be together - we don't need elite groups telling the rest of us we're dumb. If they are so smart, they should apply for early admissions or something."

Another student commented: "It's so tacky - 'we're better than you.' Who needs it? It's just going to hurt them anyway - they won't have a real high school experience. They're going to miss out on growing up."

Other high school students were in favor of it. Marc Cenedella wrote an editorial that appeared in the school newspaper which said, "The School of Excellence is not being formed so that one group of kids can say that they are smarter or better than another, but so that the kids with more potential can develop their abilities."

When interviewed for this manual, Marc commented on several facets of the School of Excellence student experience. He felt that ". . .some of the kids who got 4.0's wouldn't have a place in the Regional High School of Excellence, because they just do all their homework and there's not that spark of curiosity there. They have to have that spark of curiosity, I suppose, to be a good student for the Regional High School of Excellence."

From Marc's point of view, "There are four types of relatively intellectual kids. There is the gung-ho, all-

leadership type. There's your underachiever type who scorns society in general. There's the ultra-timid. Then there's your everyday, average type of guy. That's the rarest, the normal one," he said. Marc then added, "Being intellectual seems to breed diversity."

Marc felt that bringing all the bright students together at the School of Excellence might have been something of a disadvantage. "You bring all the kids together, and. . .they are terrified of each other. There's also the problem of kids losing contact (with other students) and not really having a social life, but if you are a relatively motivated kid you can probably keep all your friends and make more," he said. "As far as making friends, one of the big troubles among intellectual kids, sometimes they can be pretty socially inept. There would have to be something at the Regional High School of Excellence just dealing with that type of social problem, because some kids just can not deal at all. You tell them to derive a nuclear equation and they can go right to it, but tell them to go up and meet somebody and they croak."

High school student Farris El Nassar served on the Student Selection Committee. Farris felt that as a student he was able to add "a point of view that they (adult committee members) probably wouldn't see a lot of the time. I know how I would react to it in different situations, and I was able to add. . .a general student point of view."

Farris felt that there was a definite need for the Regional High School of Excellence. "Since I've been involved in sports, I kind of compare it to that, in that in sports, if you want to excel in something, there are always extra things that you can do. And I just don't think it's fair that in academics it is so restricted. One of the problems that was brought up was that they didn't want to create an elitist group or something like that, and I just don't see that as fair to the kids who need a little extra, who are more academically inclined. I just don't think it's fair to hold them back. I think they should be able to gain as much knowledge as they can, and I think (the Regional High School of Excellence) would be a good opportunity for them to do that." Farris said he knew of several students who had the ability, but didn't work hard. "I don't know what's held them back. It could have been lack of motivation, and that kind of school might have taken care of that."

Farris also served as student representative on the Board of Governance. He said that he felt that the project as a whole "was well-represented by the parents, teachers, administration, students. . ." but that he thought more input from the education department at the college would have been helpful. He also noted the sense of optimism and confidence about the project, despite the uncertainty about continued

funding. "The fact that we wouldn't get funded was a possibility, but it seemed like we were always looking beyond that."

Logistical Problems

The geographic area that the School of Excellence was to serve is approximately 500 square miles. Consequently, questions regarding transportation were a major issue among parents. They were concerned about the amount of time their youngsters might spend riding a bus, or series of buses, to and from the School of Excellence. The question was raised, "Will the value of the time spent in a half-day program outweigh the amount of time wasted riding a bus?"

The most reasonable solution to this problem was a separate transportation system, described in the earlier Business Operations chapter. This transportation system would have ensured that no youngster spend more than 45 minutes in transit from his home to the school.

Sam Corsi, project coordinator with the State Education Department, said, "In New York City, the Bronx High School of Science draws students from almost as far away as all the component schools would have been had this school been implemented at Fredonia, because New York City is that big. The Bronx and Queens and Staten Island. Often times it is not unusual for children to ride public transportation for an hour and a half or two hours to get to a school like the Bronx High School of Science, and it's all still within the city. So when people say, 'Well, my son or daughter will be in a residential rural area like this on a bus for 20 or 30 minutes and I'm not sure I like it,' people in cities say 'Gee, well you don't understand how big a city like New York is and how long a person might be on a bus or subway to get any one place."

Dr. A. Cutler Silliman, looked at the transportation problem this way: "We are a rural area, we are schools that cannot fund these programs ourselves." Dr. Silliman said that the committees thought the School of Excellence was worthwhile, "enough so that we (were) going to try to tackle the terrible logistical problems, a 50-mile spread ranging from Ripley to Pine Valley. We thought it was valuable enough, that we should proceed with the idea," he said.

Recruitment of Teachers

The recruitment and hiring of teachers represented its own set of logistical problems. Teachers were to be recruited on a county-wide basis and shared with their home district for the first year the school was in operation.

They would work half-time for the School of Excellence, and half-time for their own district.

During the spring of 1986, the Curriculum and Staffing committee drew up a task list of things to accomplish. One of the items was:

> Establish a contractual agreement with the Fredonia Teachers' Association regarding the staffing of the School of Excellence.

Teachers for the Regional High School of Excellence would still be members of the faculty of their local school district. The Fredonia Teachers' Association had agreed to accept the teachers from other districts in the school. Essentially, these teachers would be reassigned by their local district to allow for half days at the School of Excellence. Their home districts would be reimbursed for the portion of the time spent at the School of Excellence.

Ripley High School Principal Ralph Scazafabo expressed concerns about the limitations this may place on his use of his teaching staff. He felt that the lack of control of the local building administrator in the staffing situation needed to be acknowledged. He pointed out, as an example, the problems that could arise if there was a sudden need to shift teaching assignments around at the home school. All the districts involved with the School of Excellence were small, and did not have the same kind of flexibility in staffing arrangements that a larger district might have. If one or more teachers in a given department were working at the School of Excellence for a half-day, this cut back the already limited staffing assignment options available.

Skip Palmer, Director of Labor Relations at BOCES, said, "With respect to teacher contracts, it became very clear that there would be tenure questions, but there are ways around it with people taking leaves of absence from other districts."

Having the teachers work half-time at the School of Excellence and half-time in their own district was intended only to be a temporary situation, for the first year or two that the school was in operation. Teaching positions would have become full-time once student enrollment had grown large enough to warrant it, and a full 9 through 12 program had been established.

Political as Opposed to Educational Origins of the Project

The Regional High School of Excellence idea originated in the governor's office, not the State Education Department. Neil Foley, deputy secretary to Governor Mario Cuomo, said the idea for Regional High Schools of Excellence "came up

through some staff suggestions" in preparation for the governor's 1985 State of the State Message.

Sam Corsi said that they "were not told specifically" that the grants might only last for two years. "We had conversations with some of the governor's aides, and they didn't have a real good idea. They were testing something out, and they said, 'Well, let's get some money for planning and feasibility studies and see where it leads us. And at some point in time if it leads in a direction the governor wants or agrees with, or sparks an interest, then perhaps at that time we will look to the state legislature for funding to implement.' There were no assurances given. . .nobody said that anything was for sure," Mr. Corsi continued. We (needed) to see what develops and then see how the governor feels about it and then at that point in time there will be a decision made about whether or not to continue.

"Remember that this was the governor's initiative, it wasn't something that the state education department decided to do on its own," Mr. Corsi said. Once the governor articulated the program through his staff, then we were asked to come up with a set of guidelines and an application process and a management process." Mr. Corsi said that this material was then approved by the governor's office. "We (the State Education Department) didn't make any independent decisions about the program in the two years that it has been operating. Rather, we funded the grants and then managed them. . .to make sure they were legally being implemented in the way the applicants had described in their applications. Our role was strictly one of managing, our role was not as decision-makers," he said.

The State Education Department requested information on the progress of the projects several times. "The results, as reported in the interim and final reports, were what we summarized and sent across the street to the governor's office," said Sam.

Though the governor's office was not dissatisfied with what it was seeing, the direction most of the projects were taking did not quite match what the governor's office envisioned. Most of the projects took the shared program approach, while the governor's office was primarily interested in the complete school approach. Mr. Corsi said that the governor "sees them (the projects) going in directions which are very beneficial, and appropriate and very worthwhile, but not quite just what he had in mind."

"Don't lose sight of the motivation behind the governor's decision not to fund these programs anymore", Mr. Corsi continued. "The governor's not saying anything about the quality or importance of what's gone on. The motivation behind it was economic. It was originally

presented as a governor's issue to strengthen the economic basis of the state and to form a basis for attracting and keeping business and industry, because people in business and industry have said they are attracted by these types of schools. And so, by not choosing to fund these projects, the governor is in no way demeaning. . .the quality of the programs they had planned and developed by not suggesting to the legislature that they not provide funds for the implementation. He's just saying, 'This is not the image and likeness that I had in mind for my purpose.'"

Dr. Merrins also noted, "It was the governor's project. The governor wanted a full-day program for the gifted. The State Education Department had nothing to do with the original proposed project." Dr. Merrins said that the public and educators were not in favor of sending their children to full-day programs, but instead, wanted to keep them in their home schools. "There wasn't a good response to full-day programs. Some of the shared programs received a decent response, and so they moved ahead with local support," he said.

The Fredonia project had gone ahead with plans for a shared program, even though it was understood from the start that the governor was interested in full-day programs. It had moved through the planning process quite quickly, though thoroughly, and was close to being able to implement an actual program. The dissapointment of the Advisory Committee was understandable when the governor's office made the decision to rechannel funds into the development of a residential school on Long Island.

Members of the Advisory Committee always knew there was a possibility that the project would not receive continued funding. "I think probably we began to face hard, cold realities when the governor seemed to indicate that he had a particular kind of regional high school in mind," said Joan Caruso, Curriculum and Staffing Committee member. "A great promise of monies once seemed to be there, and suddenly we weren't quite so sure that those monies would be available. I think we were all realistic enough to know that if the project was reliant on local district funds that probably it would not go," she said. "It became pretty obvious that he (the governor) wanted a full-day school, and his intention was different from our particular emphasis. We were politically astute enough to know that when the governor wants to give money to somebody, he's going to give it to the project that pleases him."

Looking back on the experience, Sam Corsi said, "I wish, as an afterthought, that we, as state officials, might have been more proactively involved in the program. Unfortunately, when you have a governor's initiative and there are certain decisions made already, you are predisposed

to operate in a particular way, you are not able to be proactive and engage in decision-making. It's hard to manage something that you aren't making decisions about," he said.

Funding as the Underlying Issue

Finances concern every aspect of the operation of any educational enterprise. The availability of money can be one of the most important determinants in the ability to provide programs to serve the various student populations. This was the case with the Northern Chautauqua County Regional High School of Excellence. However, even though an actual program was not implemented, the work done for the project could well serve a future purpose.

Dr. Merrins felt that for the type of program proposed by the Fredonia project, total state funding was the only way to support it. "Something could be done with a lot less money," he said. "But for the scope of the program that we were talking about, a comprehensive program for the gifted, it would take major funding. . .something being done by the state. The state leaders would have to say 'We want these programs and here's the money to do it.' They have the power and the money, but it appears they aren't going to use it for this purpose." Dr. Merrins also noted that the Fredonia board of education, like the other participating boards, was "enthusiastic as long as the state was funding it," but that they were "cautious not to be in a position to put large amounts of funds into it. It was the same from all the school boards."

Forestville Board of Education member Doug LeBarron pointed out that, "It was not due to lack of interest as far as the High School of Excellence organization was concerned. We were ready to implement. The concept was in place, the people would have accepted it, industries, higher education facilities would have accepted it. What they would not accept was having to lay out their own dollar bills for it. State funding was very critical, there's no getting around that."

Marilyn Maytum, president of the Fredonia Board of Education, said that she didn't think the work that was done "was a complete loss." She felt that, if a similar school is established in the next few years, "a lot of the basic work has been accomplished. That's something that will be preserved for whatever future date. . .within a reasonable length of time," she said. "It's something that could be helpful for any future endeavors."

Mrs. Maytum feels that "education certainly is taking a front seat right now, versus what I would have said five or 10 years ago as a board member." She noted the increase in

education monies allocated by the legislature as a positive sign of the importance the state is placing on education. "That could be a good sign. . .that we can have things like the High Schools of Excellence on the front burner, instead of put on the back burner," she said.

Outcomes

"What we have learned, as reported through the projects, will add to the literature about how to deal with gifted and talented youth, about how to plan for schools, about the concepts of regional schooling," noted Mr. Corsi.

"I think there was a raising of awareness about the concept of gifted and talented education," said Fredonia high school principal Tom Heary. "To me, that was one of the great benefits of the project. I do think we began to stir up people to think about the fact that there was an element in our school population that was capable of much more than they were receiving. There was a general awareness, in terms of 'Do we have these students in our school? How do we serve their needs?' I do think a lot of schools that were not involved in the project began to think through what they were doing," he said.

Dr. Susan Newman stressed the importance of finding "the gifts of all the students." She hoped "that there would be some filtering down of the methods, the techniques, the strategies we used there (in the Regional High School project) into the regular school program." High school English teacher Renee Cope, Curriculum Committee member, indicated that she had drawn directly from the work of the project for her own class. "That was one of the better aspects for me, in terms of application to my teaching now. And I think that those critical thinking, higher level cognitive thinking skills, are applicable to all students, and all students need more opportunity, to understand even that those levels of thinking exist," she said. "Then once they are aware of them they can start moving through them. And then you can take your slower kids and pick them up a little bit, and you can take your academically talented kids and go further with them. It's something that I have taken and incorporated right into my curriculum."

Connie Schultz, Student Selection committee member, said that she feels good about the fact "that there are people who have addressed the problem and are working on it." For example, she said, one district that had previously utilized only the ORBITT program at BOCES is now beginning to work on the development of an in-house program on the grade school level. "There is movement, no matter how small," she said. Another positive outcome of the project was noted by Marilyn Maytum. She said the project showed "that there are school

districts that are willing to work together. That there were parents and educators and students that were all interested in this. I thought that was a real positive thing for the communities."

This was also recognized by the State Education Department. "Almost everybody tells me the planning experience has been very useful," said Sam Corsi, "if for no other reason that it apparently emphasized on a regional basis to all sorts of people those special needs of those gifted and talented youngsters that might have been served by the school. The conversations are apparently something that people have found invaluable."

Mr. Corsi went on to say that the school districts and the people involved on the committees, "engaged in a conversation that very seldom, even at a higher education level, do people get to engage in. They have in fact planned a complete school, of such unique quality and character, so different from the way normal schools are operated and run. They've done it regionally, collaboratively, they've involved the private sector, the higher education sector.

"People are very conscious of the inequity in dealing with all students in the same way in schools," Mr. Corsi continued. "There is coming out of this a consensus that we need to be able to do something a little different for those students who are gifted. . .who have an interest in and a proclivity for a particular discipline, who could, given a different type of setting, move fairly quickly, learn at a more rapid pace, become more involved and take a more active role in their own learning patterns."

"I thought this regional school idea, particularly the shared program, which is what everybody settled on, was a good idea and is a good idea," said Mr. Corsi. The end result is that "maybe someplace like. . .Fredonia will do something different because of having been involved in the project."

Summary

The myriad problems and issues presented in this chapter should not be considered in a negative light. Rather, they are reflective of the intense activity and growth of the project, and would not have occurred if the project was static. They are the positive signs of people translating a theory into action. This transformation was the result of confronting major issues ranging from funding, to employment of teachers, to the implementation of an actual program.

Despite the uncertainty of continued state funding, a sense of optimism and forward movement was consistently

maintained throughout the project. In the end, when planning for the School of Excellence had to be suspended, those who had worked on the project were truly disappointed, even though they had always been aware that the discontinuation of funds was a possibility.

In the development of a regional school, one thing the project planners became aware of was the need to avoid too strong of an identification with any one school participating in the project. Choosing the most neutral site possible as a location for the School of Excellence would be helpful in reducing some of the 'political problems' that can be associated with 'linking' the school to an individual district.

Although every effort was made to keep the public informed as to the nature and progress of the project, the complexity of the project sometimes made it difficult to understand. This was true of the general public as well as educators. In many cases, the source of criticism of the School of Excellence arose from a lack of true understanding of what it was all about, although there were those who were fully informed and did not agree with the concept. There will always be those who disagree with a course of action, or a concept, or an idea, and with good reason. However, this can be helpful to proponents of the concept or idea in the long run, as it helps to point up possible weak spots in their plan, and helps in developing stronger arguments supporting the idea.

The importance of defining terms as accurately as possible became evident within the scope of this project. Difficulties arose, for example, in trying to define a "gifted student" because the definition is not all-inclusive or able to be presented in a single sentence. Also, the 'definition' of the School of Excellence was an evolving one that was often difficult to articulate, although this improved as the project progressed.

The School of Excellence was accused of promoting elitism, a criticism often made of gifted and talented programming in general. There are no simple answers that will silence the critics, and often times ignoring the criticism may be the best solution. Many other programs provide for the needs of other groups of students. In that respect, gifted and talented programming is no different in concept. It is becoming increasingly recognized that gifted students are not always going to "make it" if left to their own devices, and that they need specialized services that will provide them with the motivation, opportunity, and challenge to reach new levels of productivity and creativity.

Directly related to the elitism issue were objections to the pull-out aspects of the School of Excellence program. In

order to provide a truly differentiated curriculum for the academically talented student, it almost has to be provided in its own setting. Pulling the students out of their regular classrooms and bringing them all to one site for total immersion appears to be the most logical way in which to accomplish this, particularly in a region of small, rural school districts. It is not the responsibility of the gifted student to provide something for his classmates in the home school. It is , however, the responsibility of the educational organization to provide something for each individual student, and to do so in the best possible manner. If pulling the gifted student out of the regular classroom is the best way to provide for his needs, then this is the obvious solution.

Accreditation of the program, and compliance with Education Law and the Commissioner's Regulations are important concerns on which information should be disseminated as early as possible. The 'experimental' nature of the program raised some questions in these areas. It is important to provide assurances to parents and potential students that participation in such a program will not jeopardize any future endeavor the student wishes to pursue. Transportation and the geography of the area play a significant role in decision making. Most regional programs would undoubtedly face similar problems. Workable, cost effective solutions can usually be found by exploring the alternatives and drawing from the best of each.

Recruitment of part-time teachers for the School of Excellence had some inherent problems including such things as seniority rights and the ability to recruit the best teachers under what would admittedly be a difficult set of working conditions. Although many teachers would have had a strong desire to teach in such a school, they may not have been willing to sacrifice the advantages they had worked to attain in their present situation. Again, while there are no easy solutions to this problem, it is necessary to look toward reasonable alternatives.

Along with the recognition and confrontation of various problems and issues, the project also had outcomes that were perceived as being immediately positive. All those involved felt that it was a worthwhile learning experience, and more importantly, that it helped in increasing the awareness of a need for programs for the gifted and talented. The teaching techniques and methods planned for the School of Excellence can also be applied in any classroom, and there are indications that this is already beginning to take place.

The project was also proof positive that the community and local school districts are willing and able to work together to improve the quality of education. The work already accomplished can provide a firm foundation for the

development of local programs in the future. Though the School of Excellence project as it was originally conceived has ended, the outcomes will continue to grow locally in an increasingly positive manner.

An awareness of potential problems at the outset of the planning process can be helpful in outlining courses of action that would reduce the likelihood of a minor problem becoming a major issue. The problems and issues presented in this chapter could have occurred with any project in any location. No planning effort is ever problem-free, and there are often situational constraints that are out of the control of those doing the planning. However, careful study and pre-planning considerations can help turn potential roadblocks into building blocks.

CHAPTER 10 RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In developing any program, general questions first need to be identified, as they help provide the initial sense of direction to be pursued. This is followed by movement from the generalizations toward more specific considerations. Questions of a general nature were identified by an outside agency early in this study project, and focused on some of the practical problems that need to be considered in the development of a program such as the School of Excellence. This material comprises the first section of this chapter.

The committees developed a comprehensive set of formal recommendations during the course of the study project. They are presented in the second section of this chapter.

In addition, some other suggestions were made during the course of the interviews for this manual. The third section of the chapter contains this material. This information as a whole is intended to serve as a general guideline for those who are considering developing programs for their own school or region.

Crucial Questions

During the first semester of the study project, a literature search in the area of gifted and talented education was conducted by the faculty and staff of SUNY Buffalo. A list of fundamental questions was developed at the culmination of the literature search. These questions, though general in nature, needed to be addressed in order to ensure the success of the program. The remainder of this section consists of those questions:

A Short List of Crucial Questions

The activity that is to follow this literature survey must focus on practical problems that will not only affect the total outcome of the project, but will also interact in significant ways with each other. A series of pragmatic decisions will need to be made and some linear ordering of these decisions will be necessary as well. But inherent in this decision making will be the necessity to turn from the comfortable abstract world of these students of tremendous potential to the far less comforting and prosaic world of Realpolitik and school finance.

In an attempt to bring some of these problems into focus, we offer here a list derived from our literature

survey, from our phone conversations with school staffs and other education personnel, and from our experience in this field:

1. Is there to be a school building?

Even though classes would almost certainly commence in temporary quarters even if the answer to this question were yes, the decision itself is a key one on which much else depends. And of course this is the bite-the-bullet decision that will create a number of opposing constituencies if the answer is yes. It will clearly place in opposition to the program (if they are not already so positioned): private school staffs, a substantial subset of local district officers, and districts like Buffalo that support their own special schools already.

Still this decision, because so much else depends on it, must be made early on. Alternatives, such as housing parts of the program in different locations, while possibly catering to the wishes of a few district officers, would create such substantial logistical problems that the decision to organize the program in a single geographic location seems almost impossible to avoid. (A serious suggestion if the answer is yes: The Governor Mario Cuomo High School of Excellence.)

2. What grades will the school encompass?

The answer to this question will have a profound impact on the curriculum. Some temporizing is possible here. It is possible to start with a grade or two, eleven and twelve for example, and to decide later whether or not to expand to other grade levels. There are some strong arguments for restricting the program to the final high school years; there are equally strong arguments, however, for starting much earlier: at ninth or even seventh grade. In particular, for most gifted students the junior high years represent a wasteland.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for starting with the last year or two of high school is a practical one, with no relation whatsoever to curricular concerns. This school will certainly wish to establish itself in the public mind quickly. (Certainly the state sponsors will be sensitive to this desire.) Nothing will speak to the public more directly than the academic honors and scholarships and the admission to fine colleges that will accrue naturally to students of such a school. Despite the extra stresses this kind of practical decision places on the development of the school curriculum, it should probably be overriding.

3. How many students are to be enrolled?

It is not possible to retreat from this question by responding that it will be the number who meet entrance requirements. (When the point of identifying students by some criterion tests is reached, the cut-off points will become arbitrary anyway.) The total student numbers will determine staffing, the nature and range of curricular offerings, space allocations, and financing.

4. What will be the interface of the program with the student's home school and school district?

This question is so crucial to the welfare of this program that decisions that relate to it should receive first priority consideration. Hopefully, here is where some of the concerns of local program opponents may be addressed.

The suggestions that follow would, we believe, go far toward resolving these problems. The willingness of state officials to respond to these possibilities will be a good measure of their investment in the local program:

(a) Funds appropriated for support of the program should go directly to it. The amount of intermediate processing, with its inevitable draining of funds, should be cut to an absolute minimum. Insofar as it is possible to arrange legally, oversight should be at the local level.

(b) State fiscal support for each student would continue to go to the home school district.

(c) Within that district credit for that student would go to the building and the teaching staff to whom the student would have been assigned. (This may seem innocuous, but is important to teachers already threatened with cut-backs in staff. By this means the reassignment of an individual student would not further exacerbate the problem of decreasing class sizes in upper track classes.)

(d) Transportation costs would be assigned to the program and not simply kicked back to the districts.

(e) The opportunity to participate in interscholastic sports and other extracurricular activities could continue at the home school.

(f) Credit for program results would be shared with the home school and district.

There are also some things that should be avoided if

at all possible. Perhaps the most important of these are quotas: each school district assigned some number of student nominations.

5. What is to be the geographic range of the student constituency?

The quality of this school will be highly dependent on the size of the population from which it is drawn. Any geographic region less than Erie and Niagara counties, including the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, would almost certainly provide too small a student pool. While outlying counties provide smaller numbers for the total pool, they too should be considered for participation simply to make the facilities available throughout the region.

A school for all of western New York (perhaps east to the north-south line through Batavia) is worth considering. While community distances become a serious problem with such a large region, past experience suggests that even these distances are not an impossible barrier. Students now commute twice each week to the Gifted Math Program at SUNY Buffalo from distances as great as 60 miles and these students must defray their own transportation costs. (This should also give some sense of the strong motivation of these families.)

6. How is the program to be staffed?

The single most important decision affecting the future success of this program will relate to the selection of the principal/director of this school. Until that leader is identified, most of what is done will remain at the level of abstraction.

The character of the program and the direction that it will take will be largely determined by this person, whether or not he or she is burdened with having to respond to a number of planning committees. In fact, the opportunity to provide leadership to these planning committees should be made available to the director. Thus the earlier this appointment can be made the better.

The possibility of dual leadership is worth considering: a principal responsible for the academic leadership of the school and an administrator whose concerns would relate largely to fiscal matters.

7. How is the school to be supported financially?

This is, of course, is the key question. Insofar as is possible program sponsors should fight for new sources of revenue (see 4 above) so that this program will be seen

as a genuine addition to the educational systems already in place. The possibilities for this school will be diminished at each point where this position is compromised.

8. Where is the school to be located?

The possibility of overlapping course work with lower division college classes strongly suggests location of the program at or near a college or university in this region. Such location would also give students an opportunity to use that college's resources such as libraries and computers.

Making this decision early will allow for negotiation of an appropriate level of interaction between the commensal institutions before the structure of the program makes this more difficult.

There are other questions that relate to and derive from these eight. We suggest that moving ahead on them without responding to the fundamental questions will, in the long run, be unproductive. For example, the curriculum will be highly dependent on staffing and staffing in turn will depend on the selection of the school's academic leaders.

Staffing arrangements that would allow for leaves of absence from regular school districts of master teachers to teach temporarily in this program can be explored. Identification and selection procedures will need to be codified. The overall curricular thrust of the school -- science and math, humanities -- must be identified. But these and other initiatives must of necessity await response to the eight fundamental questions.

Recommendations

This section includes the formal recommendations developed for the School of Excellence study project by the working committees.

A. PARENTAL SUPPORT

- The public informational meetings for parents and community members in each district should be conducted every six months throughout the study year and planning year.
- Lists of interested parents generated from the informational meetings and parent surveys should be used to direct regular mailings on the progress of the

Regional High School of Excellence.

- A Parent Association, with open membership from all local school districts, should be formed immediately and maintained as an on-going feature of the Regional High School of Excellence.

- A parent representative, elected by the Parent Association, should be a voting member of the Board of Governance of the Regional High School of Excellence.

- The Parent Association would work with the Regional High School of Excellence staff to develop a survey instrument to determine parental interest in and ability to serve as a resource to the staff and students in the Regional High School of Excellence.

- The Parent Association should work with the Regional High School of Excellence staff to develop appropriate in-service and parenting programs for parents of students selected for the school. Themes should be developed around the following topics:

  1. Concepts of Intelligence
     Characteristics of Gifted Children

  2. The Regional High School of Excellence
     - The Selection Process
     - The Curriculum
     - Evaluation
     - The Transition to College

  3. The Gifted Underachiever/Motivation

  4. The Gifted Child and His Family
     - Characteristics of Gifted Children That May Lead to Problems
     - The Gifted Child and His Siblings
     - The Gifted Adolescent
     - Coping with Pressure/Stress Management
     - Recognizing Creative Behavior
     - The Parents' Role as Educators

B. HIGHER EDUCATION

- A position of voting member on the Board of Governance of the School of Excellence should be reserved for a higher education representative, selected by the president of the higher education institution.

- Specific plans should be developed for cooperative use

of staff and resources with area and regional colleges.

* A scale for use of college personnel should be adopted as follows:

1. Student Contacts

   a. Instruction equivalent to a three-hour course (3 hours per week X 15 weeks = 45 contact hours) during one semester

   b. Instruction equivalent to a one-hour mini-course (3 hours per week X 5 weeks = 14 contact hours)

   c. Independent study with one or more students and/or with use of laboratory space

   d. Independent study with one or more students on a limited basis

   e. Occasional guest/lecture contact

2. Teacher Contacts

   a. Curriculum development with regular teachers during the summer or school year

   b. Other consultant work with teachers during the summer or school year

3. Compensation, Selection, Scheduling

   a. For 1.a. it is recommended the college be compensated at a set rate per credit hour in return for "loaning" the faculty member to the School of Excellence. The faculty members should be given a comparable course reduction at the college.

   b. In all other cases, remuneration by stipend should be worked out with faculty members on an individual basis.

   c. In cases other than 1.a., the School of Excellence should pay the instructional fees for students receiving college credit.

   d. Very good <u>first</u> experiences should be designed, using credible people and keeping in mind the nature of students at the High School of Excellence.

e. Scheduling with college personnel should be worked out well ahead of time.

f. The High School of Excellence should pay at or above the minimum rate noted and pro-rated as appropriate. That this will be a paid activity rather than volunteer should be made clear at the beginning.

C. PRIVATE SECTOR

- A position of voting member on the Board of Governance of the School of Excellence should be reserved for a representative of the business community, selected by the local Chamber of Commerce.
- Specific plans should be developed for cooperative use of staff and resources with area business and industry.
- Informational meetings should be held throughout the next two years with various civic, community and business groups throughout the region.

D. STUDENT SELECTION

- Students selected for the High School of Excellence will be those who, by virtue of outstanding abilities, either demonstrated or potential, are capable of high performance.
- Student selection will be performed by a School of Excellence committee reviewing a pool of students.
- Identification of students for the selection pool can occur in any of the following ways:

    1. Students who have scored at the designated percentile or higher on an in-grade standardized achievement test.

    2. Students who have been referred for assessment by administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, parents or peers.

    3. Any students who apply.

- Selection will be based on an individual assessment of each student referred. Multiple criteria will be used, including but not limited to:

1. A Regional High School of Excellence application (which will include submission of a student essay, a teacher recommendation and indication of any prior participation in G/T programs.

2. Some form of student work (project, hobby, poetry, etc.) in addition to the application essay.

3. SAT scores.

4. School grades and courses taken.

5. An informational interview, if needed.

6. Some form of individual testing.

7. Students will be selected for their potential for success in the program rather than by a percentage of students from each district.

- A philosophy of student selection should be established based on these ideas:

  1. Some students have unique educational needs which are best served through educational provisions that differ significantly from those offered to the general school population.

  2. In order to take advantage of these educational provisions more suited to their needs, these students must first be found.

  3. These students are of all ages, are found in all racial and ethnic groups, and are both male and female.

  4. These students are those who excel or have the potential to excel through high productive performance in mathematical, verbal and/or creative thinking areas.

- Throughout the selection process, the committee should try not only to find the students who could best benefit by the educational program offered at the Regional High School of Excellence, but seek data that will provide basic information regarding the planning of individualized educational, career and personal development programs.

* Screening should be conducted with the following points in mind:

    1. Each student in the target population should have an opportunity to be considered for the program.

    2. The number of students to be involved in the selection phase should be limited to those who are the most likely candidates for participation in the program.

    3. The data gathered in the selection process should assist in educational program planning.

* The selection process should be predicated on the notion that there is no one set of criteria that can be considered an absolute in selecting students for this program (no one test, no one score, no one recommendation). Therefore, multiple criteria should be used in the selection process.

* In the fall of the year prior to a student's eligibility to attend the Regional High School of Excellence personnel should visit local junior high schools to disseminate information about and applications for the Regional High School of Excellence.

* All students who score at or above the 93rd percentile in reading or mathematics on an in-grade standardized achievement test should be encouraged to apply. All other students will be eligible to apply.

* The application process should consist of:

    1. Completion of an application which will include several questions designed to elicit the special abilities or interests a student may have (the application will be due February 1)

    2. The application essay response

    3. Grades and testing data from the student's school

    4. SAT verbal and mathematics scores

    5. Two recommendations, one from a teacher and another either from a teacher or some other significant adult such as a scout leader, church group leader or 4-H leader.

* The deadline for all application materials should be

March 1 of the school year prior to the student's proposed admittance to the Regional High School of Excellence.

- Informational interviews should be held with students and parents.

- Review of the selection materials for each student should be conducted by a committee consisting of:

    1. The Regional High School of Excellence principal
    2. The Regional High School of Excellence teachers
    3. The Regional High School of Excellence psychologist
    4. A representative of the business/industrial/professional community

- At least one member of the selection committee should have substantial background in the education of gifted students.

- In case of doubt about a student's true ability, the student should be asked to take an individual intelligence test. This should be administered by the Regional High School of Excellence psychologist at no cost to the student or his family.

- Acceptance letters should be mailed to students on May 1, with their commitment to attend due at the Regional High School of Excellence on June 1.

- The following timeline should be adopted for the student selection process.

Oct. - Nov.	Visits to local schools; distribution of applications, brochures
Dec. - Feb.	On-site informational interviews with parents and students
First Saturday in Dec.	Students take SAT
Mid-January	SAT results mailed to Regional High School of Excellence
Feb. 1	Application deadline
March 1	All material due from schools (test data, GPA, teacher recommendations)

March 15	First review of applicants; schedule individual IQ tests as needed
April 15	Second review of applicants
May 1	Acceptance letters mailed to students
June 1	Student's letters of commitment to attend due to the School of Excellence

- Staff of the Regional High School of Excellence who work with the local schools, should encourage guidance counselors to contact students from traditionally underrepresented groups who may not meet the established cut-off point on the in-grade standardized achievement test but who appear to be potential students for the school.

- As part of the evaluation process, after the Regional High School of Excellence has been in operation for two to three years, a careful examination of the student body should be made to determine if traditionally underrepresented groups are being served. If the numbers being served are smaller than their percentage of the school population in the region, the school's staff should review the selection process to determine ways of more effectively attracting these students.

- Students should be asked to make a commitment to remain at the school for one full semester.

- For all students who are new to the school, the guidance counselor or school psychologist should meet individually with each student once per month for the first semester.

- New students should meet, in small groups of eight to 10, once per month for the first semester, to discuss common problems.

- Conferences with parents of new students should be held three times during the first semester. The first conference will be held not later than six weeks after the opening of school.

- In case of a student's poor adjustment to the school, additional conferences with the student, parent(s), teachers and other Regional High School of Excellence staff should be held on an as-needed basis.

- In cases where it is determined that a student, for some reason, is not appropriate for the program at the Regional High School of Excellence, every effort should be made to protect the student's ego and to ease his return to a full-time program at his home school.

E. STAFFING

- Certificated teachers should teach the core subject matter - language arts, math, science and social studies - in the Regional High School of Excellence.

- Coordinated teams composed of staff from public and private secondary schools, colleges, business and/or industry should be used to teach specialized subject matter.

- The specialized subject matters instructional program will be coordinated between the core subject matter teachers and the subject matter specialists.

- Core subject matter teachers will be employed on a part-time basis until sufficient enrollment warrants full-time positions.

- For year one, the application process for all professional staff members should include:

    1. A completed application
    2. A writing sample
    3. Three recommendations
    4. An interview with the Superintendent of the LEA and the Regional High School of Excellence administrator

- In succeeding years, the process should include, in addition to the above:

    1. The candidate's observation of Regional High School of Excellence classes for at least one day.

    2. An interview with current Regional High School of Excellence teachers.

    3. If possible, the candidate's teaching of Regional High School of Excellence classes for at least one day.

- It is strongly recommended that all professional staff members possess the following characteristics:

1. Evidence of understanding and acceptance of the nature and needs of intellectually superior students.

2. Support of special educational programs for intellectually gifted students.

3. Emotional maturity and a strong self-concept.

4. Superior communication (writing and speaking) skills.

5. A variety of outside interests.

6. Sensitivity to others and a non-authoritarian style.

7. Evidence of a flexible, innovative, experimental approach to problems.

8. Commitment to excellence.

* In addition, the following characteristics are recommended for the members of the teaching staff:

1. Demonstrated teaching ability in the regular classroom.

2. Evidence of ability to individualize instruction

3. Evidence of above-average competence in their primary discipline and significant interest or ability in a second discipline.

4. Willingness and ability to participate in team teaching.

5. Evidence of substantial background in gifted education.

* All staff members teaching in the Regional High School of Excellence should be paid at the same rate as in their primary source of employment.

F. CURRICULUM

See pages 71-82 for complete text of curriculum suggestions. The following is a summary:

1. Basic goals of instruction of students at the Regional High School of Excellence:

a. Provide an academically rigorous curriculum based on broad themes, with foundation courses in English, mathematics, science and social studies. The curriculum will broaden to a less-structured individualized approach in later years.

b. Development of problem-solving and critical-thinking skills will be emphasized. Students will be encouraged to think imaginatively and apply their thinking to real-life situations.

c. Students will be provided an open, synergistic learning environment where they will help in developing their own learning experiences. Students will not be supplied with answers but shown ways of finding answers on their own.

* Three approaches to curriculum design are recommended, each one different but intertwined with the other two.

1. Subject Matter Approach

   The student will demonstrate the ability to master a hierarchical skill development pattern within each core discipline.

2. Interdisciplinary Approach

   The student will demonstrate the ability to integrate knowledge from the various disciplines, which will be developed by means of the problem-solving processes.

3. Individualized Investigations Approach

   The student will demonstrate his ability to formulate and investigate real problems or topics by using appropriate problem-solving processes.

* Broad objectives of the curriculum design:

A. Content

1. Academically rigorous, based on broad, societal issues.

2. Acquisition of fundamental knowledge in core curricular areas, with understanding of the use and significance of data.

3. Development of logical thinking, analytic

thinking and responsible decision-making.

B. Process

1. An open, synergistic learning environment:

a. Participation of students in development of learning experiences.

b. Application of questions and ideas to other areas of the curriculum and student life.

2. Development of problem-finding, problem-defining and problem-solving skills:

a. Critical thinking skills

b. Creative thinking skills

c. Planning skills

C. Course Outline

1. Including general ideas and principles:

a. Relation to other disciplines and the thematic unit of study

b. Disagreements within the field

c. Historical development of the discipline

2. Demonstrate expansion of problem-solving skills:

a. Student uses diverse problem-solving methods

b. Student shows ability to describe his thought processes in arriving at a solution

c. Student can define his rationale for the thought process chosen

d. Student can implement his solution

3. Expands and builds on major interdisciplinary skills, including:

a. Well-written papers

b. Oral presentations

c. Utilization of the computer

d. Constructive contributions to the instructional group

e. Development of ethics

f. Quantitative analyses

g. Community involvement

h. Internship, mentorship

4. Evidence of those factors would be shown through:

a. course description with reading list, assignments, topics to be covered, ancillary class materials, sample exams or essay questions.

b. Statement of objectives for the course, including expectations for students and for the course.

5. All proposals should contain components from at least three of the following areas: social studies, English, mathematics, science and fine and performing arts.

6. Proposals should describe the unifying theme, how the components interrelate and how disagreements in the fields will be presented.

* Courses for the Regional High School of Excellence should address the following criteria:

A. Social Studies Objectives

1. Self Knowledge - understanding of self and development of a value system.

2. Social Knowledge - understanding of social issues and development of social responsibility.

3. Global Knowledge - understanding of the interdependence of humanity and development of a sense of global responsibility.

4. <u>For a unit in Social Studies</u> - history should include historiography and historical causality, as well as geography and study of other cultures. Civics should focus on producing conscientious citizens.

B. English Objectives

1. Students should demonstrate ability to express their thoughts clearly.

2. Students should interpret the thoughts and feelings of others' written and spoken work.

3. Students should have ability to use a computer to express and interpret ideas.

4. For a unit in English - Strong emphasis on writing and reading. Reading should involve not only decoding literal meanings but use of interpretation and interpretive principles and study of uses and abuses of language. Writing should include use of pre-writing exercises, development and organization of ideas, development of clear thesis statements, using evidence to support arguments, awareness of appropriate writing voices and audience, and use of correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.

C. Mathematics Objectives

1. Understanding of numbers and geometry, including techniques of representation, axiomatic systems, the nature of proof, and applications to problem-solving.

2. Familiarity with the language of mathematics and ability to apply deductive reasoning to other disciplines.

3. Ability to express quantitative ideas and understanding for basic concepts of algebra, geometry, statistics and computing.

4. Applications of trigonometry and calculus should be included and integrated into disciplines that will provide practical applications (i.e. natural sciences).

5. For a unit on mathematics - two aspects should be emphasized:

   a. The expansion of, or digression from, traditional topics, e.g. Pythagorean triples, transcendental numbers, probability and statistics, existence proofs, concurrency.

   b. Application of math models to problem solving, e.g. statistical analysis, "word problems."

D. Science Objectives

1. Application of analytic skills to problem-solving.

2. Understanding of contemporary social problems and the application of scientific principles and knowledge to their understanding.

3. Familiarity with basic concepts of life and physical sciences.

4. For a unit in science -

   a. Strong emphasis on hypothesis formation and planning of experiments and investigations, on analytical thinking and synthesis of ideas.

   b. Where appropriate, historical development of an idea should be examined.

   c. Emphasis on thorough investigation of a small number of concepts rather than surveys of the field.

E. Fine and Performing Arts Objectives

1. Knowledge and appreciation for various forms, styles and periods.

2. Understanding of the diversity of cultural heritages which have contributed to various forms and style.

3. Deepened understanding of aesthetic judgment and understanding of the arts as a means of self-expression and personal satisfaction.

4. Understanding of area of electronic and computer technology and applications to the fine and performing arts.

5. For a unit including a fine or performing art -

   Emphasis on history of the art, thinking and problem-solving in that discipline. Highlight creative arts as a way to respond or react to the world.

* Plan a way to develop activities to ensure articulation between the High School of Excellence and the home schools.

- Students should receive both a narrative evaluation and grade based on the rating systems used at the home schools.

- A student that would receive an A in his own school for work done at the Regional High School of Excellence should not earn a C+ or B- at the School of Excellence.

- A formal evaluation of the High School of Excellence should be conducted by an outside evaluator at the end of the school's second year in operation.

- This formal evaluation should take into consideration the characteristics of the students and should measure the achievement of the school's objectives.

- An on-going informal evaluation should be conducted in-house by the School of Excellence staff.

- During the program's development phase, a committee should be formed to study evaluation and to make recommendations concerning the collection of data which will be needed to conduct an evaluation of the School of Excellence.

- Students in the School of Excellence will receive instruction in a common curricular core of social studies, English, mathematics and science.

- The curricular core will be taught by an interdisciplinary team through an interdisciplinary approach.

- The academic year will center on broad issues, themes or problems taught in six to 10 week units. (Examples might include: Man and Technology, The Future of Communications, the Nature of Man, International competition, Exploring Scientific Frontiers.

- Relevant material from the humanities will be incorporated into the core curricular units.

- Students attending the School of Excellence will receive at least one unit of credit and a grade in each of the core disciplines - social studies, English, mathematics and science.

- As the student progresses through the four-year program, there will be increasing opportunities for internships, mentorships, and independent study.

- The Regional High School of Excellence will complement its curriculum by encouraging student placement in

guided learning experiences during school vacations and summers.

* Students will select two areas, from a combination of study areas, and a language not currently taught in their home school for special concentration during their final year(s) at the School of Excellence.

* The pilot implementation year of the Regional High School of Excellence will include students in grades 9 and 10.

* The Regional High School of Excellence classes will not be an addition to the local high school curriculum.

* The director of curriculum, and the professional staff, will be guided in curriculum development by frequent meetings with the curriculum committee of the Regional High School of Excellence.

G. GOVERNANCE

* A Board of Governance should be created to manage the Regional High School of Excellence.

* The Board of Governance should maintain a liaison with the local BOCES for coordination of shared services, as needed.

* The Board of Governance should be composed of seven members - three chosen by component school boards (as applicable), one from the Parent Association, one from the student body, one from the business/industry and one from higher education.

* The administration and administrative services of the Regional High School of Excellence should be shared with the Lead Educational Agency to provide cost effectiveness to the program.

* The Lead Educational Agency should enter into an agreement with the teachers' association to provide protection of the rights and salaries of LEA teachers working in the Regional High School of Excellence, as well as protection of the rights and salaries of those staff from component districts, business, industry and higher education working in the Regional High School of Excellence.

H. FUNDING

* The budget for the Regional High School of Excellence should be separate from the Lead Educational Agency.

* The state of New York should provide full funding for the Regional High School of Excellence.

* The state of New York should provide the component school districts with assurances of long-range full funding of the Regional High School of Excellence.

* The state of New York should provide overt, public assurance of its long-range commitment and financial support of the Regional High School of Excellence.

* Participation in the Regional High School of Excellence should not have a negative impact on the state aid provided to component school districts as a result of component school district participation.

I. TRANSPORTATION

* A differential student transportation program should be established so that total transportation time between their home and the High School of Excellence for any individual student does not exceed 45 minutes.

* The state of New York should provide full transportation funding of the Regional High School of Excellence.

* Student transportation to the Regional High School of Excellence would be contracted with an outside carrier to avoid costly start up costs of plant, inventory, plant equipment and a fleet.

* The projected Regional High School of Excellence "day" will begin at approximately 8:00 a.m. and end at 11:30 a.m. (for a half-day program).

* The morning bus run is the only one for which the Regional High School of Excellence will provide transportation, since students may be picked up by their own district bus, which will also stop at BOCES, for the return trip to their home high school.

* With contract busing, routes covering several school districts should pick up students who live near each other geographically. The system will be a flexible one, permitting students to transfer from one bus to another.

* Buses should start their pick-ups at a variety of times to assure students' arrival at the school by 8 a.m.

* Routings for buses and projected costs will be planned

when actual students are identified.

* Mini-vans used in transporting students to the Regional High School of Excellence would be used during the school day to provide transportation to various sites (for educational purposes) throughout the morning.

* Mini-vans should be housed in different districts overnight to facilitate the morning bus runs.

J. FACILITIES

* The Regional High School of Excellence should be housed in a separate, physically recognized site.

* The library, science rooms and specialized classrooms in the Lead Educational Agency should be available for Regional High School of Excellence use on an as-needed basis.

* The specialized facilities of the higher education institutions, business, industry, government and community should be used on an as-needed, as-available basis.

Suggestions

Suggestions offered by those interviewed for this manual touched on various areas such as public relations, the use of instructional techniques, and planning methods used by the working committees.

"We felt there had to be an on-going (PR) presentation program to boards of education, to faculty, to teachers, to guidance counselors," said Lee Potts, Student Selection Committee member. Fellow committee member Connie Schultz added, "They have to be sold on the idea."

An intense one-day in-service program for guidance counselors and administrators was also advocated by the committee, Mr. Potts said. Members of the Student Selection Committee also felt that it wa: important to do something similar for the parents of potential students identified for the program. Parents need to see the benefits of such a program, and become aware of the unique opportunities their child would have in it. "That kind of PR could win you a cadre, and then (you) develop a cadre of parents who would form a committee for your school, because you need that too," said Mr. Potts.

Forestville Superintendent William Loftus also felt that

it was important to "market" the parents of gifted students. "I would have gotten a list of names from the schools and put them on a mailing list. (The parents) would be getting the information in a newsletter style in their home. That way you build up their support. I don't think they read it in the newspapers," he said.

Ripley High School Principal Ralph Scazafabo felt that the parents of potential students were not marketed. "Who did we market to? We put it in the general newspapers. Bullfeathers! We should have targeted those people (parents), brought them all in here, mass marketed to those people we were trying to sell it to. We could have sold this thing - we could have had them demanding it," he said.

Dr. Susan Newman, director of the Montessori Pre-School in Silver Creek, noted the PR benefits that can come out of pilot testing a process or program. "Actually trying the project out was very interesting," said Dr. Newman, referring to the pilot test of the student selection process. "Another thing that could have been done would be to have a trial of the program, some type of a summer program. Obviously, they couldn't have figured out all of the difficulties that would have been involved, but some of them would have showed up. I think when you actually get into implementing a program, that's when you see the difficulties that you are going to have, and that's also when you see the positive aspects. If parents can actually see something in place, if teachers or administrators can see that it can get off the ground, I think they are more apt to buy into it. When it's just an abstract idea, then it's kind of tough."

A suggestion was also made in regard to the instructional techniques advocated for the School of Excellence. "What I think really should happen is that the instructional techniques that were discussed there, should be pushed strongly in every class," said Skip Palmer, director of labor relations at BOCES.

Westfield Superintendent Robert Olczak, who acknowledged a personal bias toward science and math, said he would have liked to have seen a stronger orientation toward those subjects. "Personally, if I were making a decision about the curriculum, I would have gone with a science-math orientation. I do feel that there is an economy of scale and bigger is better, but I think generally we do a pretty good job with the humanities (and) social sciences back at the local school. When you are getting into the more advanced stages of science and math, I really do feel that bigger can be better. I'm certain that if a humanities approach was done at a Regional High School of Excellence, I think under the leadership that the program would have had, and the people that would have been involved in it, we would have had an unbelievably outstanding program."

The study project planning process utilized a committee structure that afforded "an opportunity for input at every level. I don't think anyone could say that their thoughts weren't heard and considered," said Mr. Olczak. "Everything was done in a well-organized, timely sort of fashion. There was input from all the various constituencies that would have been involved."

Fredonia Board of Education member Irene Talarico agreed. She said that on every committee she had worked on previously, all the members had very similar backgrounds. "But, here we had parents, we had administrators, we had teachers, board members and we even had students. Everybody brought in something and gave a different point of view that added to the total picture," she said.

When using a planning design that involves a number of working committees, it is important to set up and maintain strong and comprehensive communication links between all committees. Each committee needs to be familiar with and understand the work of the others in order to have a good grasp of the "big picture."

The Board of Governance was set up in the second year of the project. Its purpose was to direct the project, and make decisions about that direction. Members of the board represented each facet of the project, in addition to outside concerns that would have been involved. However, there is another perspective on the function of such a board. Its role as the governing body of the School of Excellence could have been an evolving one. Had it been formed earlier in the project, it could have initially served as a useful information conduit, and eventually become the actual governing board of the school.

Commenting on the role a Board of Governance could have had, Doug LeBarron, Parental Support Committee member said, "I think a Board of Governance should have been set up immediately. Instead of having a 40-member advisory board, which is too many, narrow it down to a group that is in fact in charge, a Board of Governance. (That way) at least a member from each committee would have had a perspective on the total package. I didn't really understand the entire package until the Board of Governance was formed and all the material was assimilated into one spot," he said. (It should be noted that the Advisory Committee structure was required by the RFP.)

The committees approached their work from a research base right from the beginning of the project. The appropriateness of this method was noted by Sam Corsi of the State Education Department, who said, "I can remember the

early conversations with Jim (Merrins), where he was trying to get a handle on what the research said." Mr. Corsi said he had attended some of the committee meetings, "where they would bring articles and they would have conversations over the telephone with experts in the field, trying to learn all they could about what the people who had experience, and had been thinking about the issues, had to say on the topic."

In addition to operating from a research base, a comprehensive planning technique was utilized that helped lead to the best, most feasible solutions to problems. Carter Town, Business Administrator for the Fredonia Central School District, felt that the technique of developing a comprehensive list of options, followed by exploring the advantages and disadvantages of each, worked well. Mr. Town said that each committee member would do this individually, and then the committee would look at the information collectively.

"I think that method worked very well. It was very effective," he said, adding that it provided a focus on the solution to the problem. "We weren't all over the place," said Mr. Town. Use of such a technique allows solutions to a problem to be arrived at in a reasoned, well thought out manner. It also allows the solution to be examined from more than one perspective in order to help determine its strength.

Another suggestion with regard to committees had to do with the people who comprise them. Committee members must be approachable and easy to work with. When working committees are initially being set up, outgoing people who can go back to other groups and convince them to support the project should be targeted. A committee consisting of individuals who are involved only because of their personal interests may not be able to achieve the level of effectiveness the project would like in terms of winning outside support. Skip Palmer suggested that committee members need to understand the dual nature of their responsibilities. "They are doing two things," he said. "They are doing what the committee is instructed to do, but they are also trying to show (others) that the committee was working and (committee members) were convinced and said 'Here, let me try to convince you.'

"We tend to pick people who are above average but not bright to be our leaders," Mr. Palmer continued. "And if the committees consisted of people who were in themselves gifted, the other people may not have been interested in listening to them. Unfortunately, really bright people threaten or scare people of average intelligence."

Though the Regional High School of Excellence study project itself is no longer in operation, it should not be looked at in the sense that it has come to an end. The work that was begun will continue to have an effect, and will

provide the basis for future efforts in developing programs for gifted and talented students. Sam Corsi felt that "the work that the various committees here at Fredonia did over the past two years was exemplary, in terms of the planning process, in terms of the way they involved the various constituencies, in terms of the quality of the commitment that they brought to it. These people weren't just fooling around with an idea."

"Now we are looking at where we are and where we have been," Carter Town said. "If our learning process can be shared throughout the state, then that's a benefit."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12234

June 27, 1985

District Superintendents and Superintendents of Schools

Gerald L. Freeborne

Regional High Schools of Excellence Planning Grants

The New York State Education Department is please to announce the availability of Planning Grants for Regional High Schools of Excellence. This announcement reflects a State appropriation for 1985-86 of one million dollars ($1,000,000). The Request for Proposal (RFP), application, and budget forms to be used are enclosed.

Grants will be awarded to BOCES or School Districts interested in planning for the development of Regional High School of Excellence. Two types of Planning Grants are available:

1. Shared Program grants in which students would spend part of their day at the proposed school; and

2. Complete Programs grants in which students would spend their entire day in attendance at the proposed school.

Proposals will be judged on the basis of criteria established in the Request for Proposal as well as an appropriate geographic spread of awards. The proposals most closely addressing the criteria stated in the RFP will receive the highest priority for funding.

Applications for this RFP must be postmarked by August 9, 1985, or hand-delivered by August 12, 1985 to the New York State Education Department, Regional High Schools of Excellence Project, Room 860 EBA, Albany, New York 12234. If you have any questions regarding this RFP, you may call Samuel W. Corsi, Jr., James Gaughan, or Laurie Rowe at (518) 474-2380.

Enclosure

8. School Participation Information

In order to receive funds under this Request for Proposal, there must be at least two districts, including the applicant district if a district is the applicant agency, participating in this planning grant. Please complete the following information for each participating district (use additional sheets if necessary). Letters from the district indicating agreement to participate in the program must be attached from each Superintendent or District Superintendent.

District/BOCES Name _____

Superintendent _____

Address _____
City State Zip

Phone ( ) _____
Area Code

District/BOCES Name _____

Superintendent _____

Address _____
City State Zip

Phone ( ) _____
Area Code

District/BOCES Name _____

Superintendent _____

Address _____
City State Zip

Phone ( ) _____
Area Code

District/BOCES Name _____

Superintendent _____

Address _____
City State Zip

Phone ( ) _____
Area Code

9. Planning Grant Advisory Committee

Please provide the names of all members of the Planning Committee, their positions, and the organizations they represent. (Use additional sheets if necessary).

NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION

June 1985

PLANNING GRANT FOR
REGIONAL SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

This is a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a planning grant leading to the development and implementation of a plan for a Regional School of Excellence.

Please review the description which follows before deciding to submit a proposal. Questions or inquiries regarding submission of a planning grant for a Regional School of Excellence should be addressed to The New York State Education Department, Room 860 EBA, Regional Schools of Excellence Project, Albany, NY 12234.

Eligible Applicants

1. All New York State school districts, except New York City

2. Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)

Total Funds Available: $1,000,000

Type of School Program	Grant Range	Anticipated Number of Awards
Shared	up to $50,000	6-10
Complete	up to $125,000	4- 7

Application Deadline

Applications must be postmarked by August 9, 1985, or hand-delivered to the New York State Education Department, Regional High Schools of Excellence Project, Room 860 Education Building Annex by August 12, 1985. Successful applicants will be contacted and awards announced by August 26, 1985, with the projects beginning no later than September 3, 1985, and ending on June 30, 1986.

Description of Priority Area

Background. Governor Cuomo proposed to include the amount of $1,000,000 in the 1985-86 Executive Budget to be made available to school districts on a regional basis to foster the creation of Regional Schools of Excellence. The Legislature concurred with his proposal by including this appropriation in the 1985-86 Local Assistance Education Budget. This RFP makes these funds available to interested regional groups of school districts seeking to plan for the development of Regional Schools of Excellence.

Schools of Excellence will contribute to the quality of New York State education and provide strong signals to business and industry that New York has opportunity and excellence and is an attractive place to work and live.

Purpose. One million dollars is appropriated to provide regional groups of school districts an opportunity to plan the development of a School of Excellence.

For the purpose of this RFP, Schools of Excellence can be described as regional high schools which offer intensive, specialized programs to a selected number of students to foster high achievement in selected disciplines. The program and curriculum of such a school would focus on, or give emphasis to, selected subject areas such as mathematics, science, technology or the arts. These programs would involve students in a challenging curriculum and be characterized by innovative teaching strategies, a wide variety of learning resources, including interaction with and involvement of parents, the private sector, and higher education. The proposed program must be of a unique character not already available at this time in the participating school districts.

Residential programs will not be considered.

Types of Program Planning Grants

An application shall be limited to planning for the development of Schools of Excellence in grades 9-12. Applicants may plan for the gradual implementation of such schools, beginning with one or more grade levels in the initial year and adding other grade levels until a complete high school, grades 9-12, is implemented. Please note that such gradual implementation must be done in the context of a complete 9-12 development plan.

Two types of planning grants are available leading to the development of Schools of Excellence: shared and complete programs.

1. Shared Program. A group of school districts, either on a consortium, BOCES, or multi-BOCES basis, may apply for a planning grant to develop plans for a Regional School of Excellence in which students would spend part of their day at the proposed school focusing on selected subjects such as mathematics, science, technology or the arts. The remainder of the day would be spent by each student in his or her home school or school district receiving instruction in all other subjects leading to the completion of graduation requirements.

2. Complete Program. A group of school districts, on a consortium, BOCES, or multi-BOCES basis, may apply for a planning grant to develop a plan for a Regional School of Excellence in which students spend their entire day in attendance at the proposed school. Students would receive a comprehensive educational program at the school, with special emphasis on selected subjects such as science, mathematics, technology or the arts. The school with a Complete Program would offer students a complete high school program leading to graduation.

The Regional School of Excellence with a Complete Program must serve a minimum of 100 pupils per grade to be considered eligible for this type of grant. In addition, it must offer the full complement of activities that a comprehensive high school offers such as extra-curricular activities.

Project Application for a Planning Grant

One application, containing the original signature of the chief administrative officer of the applicant agency on the cover page and on the SA-147 budget form, plus four additional copies, should be submitted to the State Education Department, Regional Schools of Excellence Project, Room 860 EBA, Albany, N.Y. 12234.

The project application must contain the following four parts:

1. General Project Information (page A-1) contains demographic information about the applicant agency.

2. School Participation Information (page A-2) contains information about each school district/BOCES which is participating in the planning grant. Letters of agreement from participating school districts/BOCES must be included in the application.

3. Planning Grant Advisory Committee Information (page A-3) contains information about the Committee. This Committee must be involved in the development of the Planning Grant proposal as well as in its implementation, and shall contain names of representatives from participating regional school districts including teachers, administrators, and school board members, parents of potential enrollees, higher education institutions, business and industry, and students. The names of the

participating organizations and positions of persons representing those organizations also must be provided. The committee should number no less than 15 members and parents of potential enrollees representation on the committee should be no less than one-third of the total committee.

As part of the implementation of this plan, a subcommittee of the Planning Grant Advisory Committee must be formed, headed by the parent representatives of the Committee, for the purpose of involving wider parent representation and involvement to determine parent interest in and potential support for the Regional Schools of Excellence.

4. Planning Project Description provides a detailed narrative that specifies the activities, roles, tasks, and timelines for the planning project.

The narrative should also describe how the Planning Grant Advisory Committee addressed specific issues related to the structure of a Regional School of Excellence; such as, parent involvement, student and staff selection procedures, program development processes, support services needs, facility planning, articulation with the private sector and higher education institutions, and proposed governance and financial structures.

Specifically, the narrative should include:

A. information on activities of the Planning Grant Advisory Committee. The regional nature of this grant makes the Committee a crucial component of the program. The information should contain:

(1) a description of how the Planning Grant Advisory Committee was formed. Include the specific procedures and rationale used to select committee members, giving special emphasis to the procedures used to select parent representatives;

(2) a description of how a Planning Grant Advisory Committee was involved in the development of this application. Include meeting dates and descriptions of relevant discussions and actions. Any other information pertaining to the planning for the grant may be included here;

(3) a description of how the Planning Grant Advisory Committee and its subcommittee will be involved in the ongoing planning process. A description of the Committee's roles and responsibilities also should be described;

B. a description of activities which will be conducted to identify community and parent interest, including descriptions of proposed plans to solicit on-going parent support.

C. a description of activities to research and examine the issues and problems related to the development of a School of Excellence, with either a Complete or Shared program, procedures for identifying potential student participation, community and parent interest, descriptions of relevant literature, procedures for identifying opinions of educational specialists, possible participation of the private sector, and programs that have already addressed the issues.

The analyses should also include a description of the importance of a Regional School of Excellence to the local school districts and a description of the process to be used to identify the discipline area(s) to be given special emphasis;

D. a management or work plan which contains:

(1) a proposed detailed procedural plan identifying the factors and issues relating to the development of a School of Excellence and a description of a process for reaching decisions on how a school or program would be implemented. This workplan should describe the approaches to be employed to complete each task outlined.

While a general statement of the planned work is appropriate, procedures should be described specifically for each task including information on what is to be accomplished, the rationale for each activity, who is responsible and involved in the planning and implementation of the activity, an estimated timeline for the activities, and an evaluation plan;

(2) staff and/or outside specialists who are expected to have specific roles and a description of their background and qualifications;

(3) a description of facilities and resources in the applicant district(s) which are available to carry out the project;

E. preliminary ideas regarding the proposed school structure which includes descriptions of procedures for determining:

(1) student selection process, including entrance requirements, selection procedures, size of class, etc. (special attention should be given to access and equity for traditionally underrepresented groups of students);

(2) staff selection procedures, staff orientation and inservice programs;

(3) program development process, including the identification and development of those discipline areas to be emphasized. The proposed program must be of a different and more intense level than advanced placement programs already existing in most local school districts;

(4) parent involvement, including detailed descriptions of structures which will facilitate the continued involvement and support of parents.

(5) articulation with the private sector, including detailed steps describing the active involvement of business, industry or other elements of the private sector in the creation and implementation of a Regional School of Excellence;

(6) articulation with higher education institutions, including potential participation in such areas as: program development, program evaluation, student testing, teacher inservice in the development and implementation of these schools;

(7) facilities planning, including the assessment of the use of existing facilities for the creation of the proposed regional school and the construction of any new facilities. Applicants are encouraged to investigate the use of already existing facilities.

(8) governance/financial structures necessary for implementing and maintaining the regional school; and

(9) transportation planning, including an assessment of transportation needs and the development of an efficient transportation program. Applicants are encouraged to investigate the use of existing transportation resources to establish a regional transportation program for the purposed program. Planning should also take into account the current transportation aid formula which would not provide any aid during the first year of operation.

F. a preliminary proposed evaluation plan for the developmental and implementation stages of the Regional Schools of Excellence.

Budget and Budget Narrative

The SA-147 budget form, included with this packet, should report detailed costs including stipends, fringe benefits, personnel, materials, equipment, travel, consultants, etc., which will be supported from the grant. In addition, applicants are requested to submit a budget narrative describing in detail the purpose of each expenditure. An initial advance payment representing a percentage of the approved budget total will be made to the local agency at the time of project approval. The fiscal aspects of all projects should be administered in accordance with the General Guidelines for Fiscal Resources and Responsibility: Special State Aided Programs, a copy of which is enclosed.

Procedures For Reviewing Grant Applications

At least three readers will read and rate each grant application. Awards will be made to those districts or BOCES with the highest ratings, subject to the availability of funding. Geographic distribution of funds will also be considered in the final decision-making regarding funding.

Priority for funding will be given to those applications which show the most evidence of: the existence of a planning committee; the active involvement of parents; the identification of discipline areas which the Regional School of Excellence will focus on including a rationale for the choice; and, a description of how existing resources in the area (business, industry, higher education, cultural institutions, etc.) will complement and cooperate in the development/implementation of the regional high school program.

Interim and Final Reports

One of the intentions of the planning grant is to identify issues and problems which need to be addressed, perhaps through regulation or legislation, related to the development and implementation of Regional Schools of Excellence. Successful applicants should identify problems or issues and proposed solutions, both as a part of their required Interim Report, and in their Annual Report.

Applicants are particularly encouraged to address issues or concerns relating to the governance or funding of schools of Excellence. The interim and final reports submitted by participating school districts and/or BOCES will provide a valuable source of information in shaping the subsequent development of these programs.

1. An Interim Report will be required from each funded planning project by December 1, 1985. The Interim Report will include, at a minimum, the following:

   (a) A description of the actual processes used to determine the need for a Regional School of Excellence, including the projected number of students interested in attending and the support of the parents and general community in the participating school districts;

   (b) Demographic information about the regional area the School of Excellence would serve;

   (c) An identification of the type of program, either Shared or Complete, that the planning process identified as being appropriate, and a rationale for that decision;

   (d) Evidence of commitment from parents, higher education institutions, business constituencies and local school boards of education participating in the project for their initial and continued support of the School of Excellence;

(e) A description of the completed Planning Grant Advisory Committee activities, including an identification of the meetings and activities undertaken and accomplishments to date.

(f) Preliminary recommendations regarding governance/financial structures necessary for implementing and maintaining the regional schools or programs.

(g) Identification of significant problems/ issues and proposed solutions which have been discussed in the planning process including ways in which access and equity are provided to traditionally underenrolled populations..

(h) A completed Fiscal Progress Report for State Aided Categorical Programs (Form SA-147B). This report should indicate actual expenditures incurred from the beginning of the project through the end of the interim report period and will be the basis for a second payment.

2. The Final Report of successful applicants will be the plan describing the proposed development and implementation of the School of Excellence, including all issues addressed as part of the planning grant narrative, and reports and evaluations from all other activities undertaken, including issues/problems and proposed solution(s). It will also include a final expenditure report (Form SA-147 with the "Final Claim Submitted" column completed) which will be the basis on which a final payment will be made.

T (F) SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR BRIGHT STUDENTS WILL CREATE AN ELITIST GROUP

T (F) TRULY BRIGHT STUDENTS CAN SUCCEED ON THEIR OWN

(T) F 10-15% OF ALL BRIGHT STUDENTS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL PRIOR TO GRADUATION

T (F) WE "TAKE CARE OF" BRIGHT STUDENTS IN OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS

(T) F BRIGHT STUDENTS THINK DIFFERENTLY THAN AVERAGE STUDENTS

T (F) IT'S NOT FAIR TO DIRECT SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO ONE GROUP. ALL CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE THE SAME PROGRAM

(T) F A STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 135 IS AS DIFFERENT FROM THE STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 100 AS IS A STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 65

T (F) BRIGHT STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL IN HONORS COURSES

T (F) A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR BRIGHT STUDENTS WILL TAKE ALL OUR STUDENT LEADERS OUT OF OUR SCHOOL

T (F) WE ALL KNOW WHO THE BRIGHTEST STUDENTS ARE

SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR BRIGHT STUDENTS WILL CREATE AN ELITIST GROUP.

Gallagher, J. J. Research Summary on Gifted Child Education. Springfield, Ill.: State Department of Public Instruction, 1966.

Martinson, R. An Analysis of problems and priorities: Advocate survey and statistics sources. Education of the Gifted and Talented. Report to the Congress of the United States by the U.S. Commissioner of Education and background papers submitted to the U.S. Office of Education: Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1972.

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Marland, Sidney P., Sr. Education of the Gifted and Talented. Report to the U.S. Congress by the U.S. Commissioner of Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1971.

Meeker, Mary. "Differentiated Syndromes of Giftedness and Curriculum Planning: A Four-Year Follow-Up." Journal of Special Education 2; Winter, 1968.

10-15% OF ALL BRIGHT STUDENTS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL PRIOR TO GRADUATION.

Bridgman, Donald S. The Duration of Formal Education of High Ability Youth. Washington, D.C.: National Science Foundation, 1961.

WE "TAKE CARE OF" BRIGHT STUDENTS IN OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS.

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French, Joseph L. ed. Education of the Gifted: A Book of Readings. Rev. Ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964.

IT'S NOT FAIR TO DIRECT SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO ONE GROUP. ALL CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE THE SAME PROGRAM.

Warner, W.L., Havighurst, R.J. and Loeb, M.B. Who Shall Be Educated? The Challenge of Unequal Opportunities. New York: Harper & Row, 1944.

A STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 135 IS AS DIFFERENT FROM THE STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 100 AS IS A STUDENT WITH AN I.Q. OF 65.

Webb, James T., Meekstroth, Elizabeth A. and Tolan, Stephanie S. Guiding the Gifted Child. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Psychology Publishing Company, 1983.

BRIGHT STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL IN HONORS COURSES.

Goldberg, M., Passow A., Justman, J. & Hage, G., The Effects of Ability Grouping. New York: Bureau of Publications Teachers College, Columbia University, 1965.

Borg, W., An Evaluation of Ability Grouping. U.S. Office of Education Cooperative Research Project No. 577. Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1964.

A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR BRIGHT STUDENTS WILL TAKE ALL OUR STUDENT LEADERS OUT OF OUR SCHOOL.

Drews, E. "Four Faces of Able Adolescents." Saturday Review, 1963, 46(3), 69-71.

WE ALL KNOW WHO THE BRIGHTEST STUDENTS ARE.

Pegnato, C.W. and Birch, J.W. "Locating Gifted Children in Junior High Schools: A Comparison of Methods." Exceptional Children 25 (1959), 300-304.

Marland, op.cit.

SUMMARY

ATTENDANCE SHEET

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

		Numbers Present					
	District	Bd.	Adm.	Public	Fac.	Comm/Mem	Stud.
BOARD MEETINGS							
Sept. 11	Fredonia	7	7	4	2	4	0
Oct. 17	Brocton	6	2	8	2	0	1
Nov. 4	Forestville	7	1	3	3	0	0
Nov. 12	Westfield	9	4	6	7	2	0
PUBLIC MEETINGS							
Oct. 28	Fredonia	0	4	35	0	9	0
Nov. 18	Brocton	0	2	8	8	0	0
Nov. 6	Pine Valley	0	1	10	2	1	6
Nov. 7	Forestville	0	0	25	2	2	3
Nov. 13	Westfield	0	1	32	0	1	0
Nov. 14	Ripley	0	0	17	0	0	4
Nov. 21	Silver Creek	2	2	21	1	4	0
FACULTY MEETINGS							
Oct. 15	Fredonia	0	0	0	48	0	0
Oct. 30	Pine Valley	0	0	0	12	1	0
Nov. 8	Silver Creek	0	3	0	65	0	0
Nov. 12	Fredonia	0	2	0	33	0	0
Nov. 13	Westfield	0	1	0	32	1	0
Nov. 14	Ripley	0	1	0	10	2	4

MEDIA PRESENTATIONS

Nov. 12	Radio at WDOE --half hour call-in talk program on public radio	0	1	?	0	2	0
Nov. 18	Videotape at FSUC --half hour talk program on cable television	0	1	?	0	2	0

ORGANIZATIONS

Nov. 21	Fredonia Rotary	0	0	30	0	0	0

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

JUDITH M. DEIULIO
EDUCATIONAL PLANNER

JAMES M. MERRINS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COMMUNITY INTEREST SURVEY

Seven northern Chautauqua County school districts have received a grant to study a practical way to establish a school to help our most able, talented and academically ambitious students achieve their greatest potential.

The proposed school would offer a half-day program with a unique curriculum. The curriculum would include a variety of specialized programs, advanced teaching methods and the involvement of business, industry and higher education in the education of students.

A critical part of the study is a determination of community interest in and support for the High School of Excellence concept. If you would support the concept, or would like more information about it, please complete the following:

- ☐ I am interested in receiving information on a Regional High School of Excellence.
- ☐ I am interested in attending a meeting to learn more about a Regional High School of Excellence.
- ☐ I am interested in providing support in some way (e.g., attending meetings, making phone calls) for the Regional High School of Excellence.
- ☐ I have a child or children who could potentially benefit from attendance at a Regional High School of Excellence.

Name of Parent:_____

Street Address:_____

City or Village, State, Zip:_____

Phone No.:_____

Name(s) of child/children and grade(s) in school:_____

_____

School District in which you live:_____

Please mail to: Mrs. Judith Deiulio, Educational Planner
Regional High School of Excellence
425 East Main Street
Fredonia, New York 14063

Local Postal Patron

CAR-RT-SORT
14063

Regional High School of Excellence
425 East Main Road
Fredonia, New York 14063

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Fredonia, NY

ATTENTION PARENTS
AND INTERESTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

New York State REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

STUDY PROJECT

Monday, October 28 — Fredonia Central School District — 7:30-8:30 P.M.
Room 201, High School

Seven northern Chautauqua County school districts have been awarded a grant to study the possibility of starting a Regional High School of Excellence. The school would offer intensive, specialized programs to selected students to attain high academic achievement. The school will provide a challenging curriculum characterized by innovative teaching strategies, stimulating learning resources and participation of parents, business, industry, and higher education.

A required part of the study is the presentation of information about the project to interested parents and members of the community. Parents and interested community members are encouraged to attend an informational meeting on Monday, October 28, 1985 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 201 of the High School Building.

If you are unable to attend the meeting and would like further information please complete and return the survey form on the reverse side.

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
1986-87 BUDGET
DEVELOPMENTAL YEAR

Rev. 11/26/85

DESCRIPTION			
SUPPORT			
BOARD OF GOVERNANCE			
Contractual Expense		$ 8,000.	
Travel	$ 2,000		
Public Relations	5,000		
Postage	1,000		
Materials & Supplies		1,500.	
TOTAL BOARD OF GOVERNANCE		9,500.	
CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR			
Instructional salaries 0.2 FTE		$ 10,000.	
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION			
Instructional salaries 0.2 FTE		$ 6,000.	
CENTRAL SERVICES			
Rental Expense 2 classrooms		$ 5,000.	
Utilities - phone rental & expend.		3,000.	
TOTAL CENTRAL SERVICES		$ 8,000.	
TOTAL SUPPORT			$ 33,500.
INSTRUCTION			
SUPERVISION-REGULAR SCHOOL			
Instructional salaries - Principal 0.5 FTE (12 mo.)		$ 17,500.	
Non-instructional salaries - Secretary 0.5 FTE		8,000.	
Equipment		13,850.	
Office furniture	$ 2,500.		
Typewriter	850.		
Copier	2,000.		
Wordprocessing system	8,500.		
Conference, Travel & Expenses		3,000.	
Materials & Supplies		3,000.	
TOTAL SUPERVISION-REGULAR SCHOOL		$ 45,350.	

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & IMPROVEMENT

Instructional salaries - Curriculum planners 2.5 FTE (12 mo.)		$ 62,500.
Non-instructional salaries - secretary 1.5 FTE		18,000.
Equipment		15,200.
Office furniture	$ 5,000.	
Typewriters (2)	1,700.	
Wordprocessing system	8,500.	
Contractual Expenses		36,000.
Outside consultants	$ 6,000.	
Conference & travel	5,000.	
Staff in-service	10,000.	
Curriculum Development	15,000.	
Materials & supplies		5,000.
TOTAL CURRIC. DEVEL. & IMPROVE.		$ 136,700.

GUIDANCE

Instructional salaries counselor Full time (half-year) 0.5 FTE	$ 15,000.
Equipment - office furniture	1,200.
Contractual Expense	500.
Materials & Supplies	1,000.
TOTAL GUIDANCE	$ 17,700.

PSYCHOLOGIST SERVICES

Instructional salaries 0.5 FTE	$ 15,000.
Equipment - office furniture	1,200.
Contractual expense	500.
Materials & supplies	1,000.
TOTAL PSYCHOLOGIST SERVICES	$ 17,700.

TOTAL INSTRUCTION $ 217,450.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

State Retirement	$ 2,750.
Teacher Retirement	28,800.
Social Security	10,900.
Workers' Compensation	500.
Life Insurance	300.
Health Insurance	13,200.
TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	$ 56,450.
TOTAL PLANNING BUDGET	$ 307,400.

ANTICIPATED COSTS

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE
1987-88 BUDGET
IMPLEMENTATION YEAR

Rev. 12/8/86

I. EXPENDITURES

SUPPORT

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

Contractual Expense		$	2,500
Travel	$ 1,000		
Public Relations	1,000		
Postage	500		
Materials & Supplies			2,000
TOTAL BOARD OF GOVERNANCE			4,500

CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Instructional salaries 0.1 FTE	$	5,500

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Instructional salaries 0.1 FTE	$	4,000

CENTRAL SERVICES

Rental Expense 2 classrooms & offices	$	7,000
Contractual Expenses - phone rental, equipment repairs		2,000
Custodial Services		1,800
TOTAL CENTRAL SERVICES	$	10,800

TOTAL SUPPORT		$ 28,800

INSTRUCTION

SUPERVISION-REGULAR SCHOOL

Instructional salaries - Principal 0.2 FTE (12 mo.)	$	7,500
Non-instructional salaries - Secretary - 0.5 FTE		6,000
Equipment - office furniture		1,000
Conference, Travel & Expenses		1,000
Materials & Supplies		2,000
TOTAL SUPERVISION-REGULAR SCHOOL	$	17,500

.RRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & IMPROVEMENT

Instructional salaries - Curriculum planners		$ 16,000
Contractual Expenses		10,000
Outside consultants	$ 3,000	
Conference & travel	2,000	
Staff in-service	2,000	
Curriculum Development	3,000	
Materials & supplies		2,000
TOTAL CURRIC. DEVEL. & IMPROVE.		$ 28,000

INSTRUCTION - REGULAR SCHOOL

Instructional Salaries		
4 Teachers @ .67 FTE		$ 67,000
Equipment		15,500
Various for specific areas of instruction	$ 3,000	
Office furniture	3,000	
Typewriters (2)	1,500	
Word precessing system (2)	8,000	
Contractual Expense		5,000
Travel	1,000	
Conference	3,000	
Misc.	1,000	
Materials & Supplies		5,000
Textbooks		10,000
BOCES Services - Library & AV		4,000
TOTAL INSTRUCTION - REGULAR SCHOOL		$ 106,500

PSYCHOLOGIST SERVICES

Instructional salaries - Psychologist 0.2 FTE		$ 6,000
Equipment - office furniture		1,200
Contractual expense		500
Materials & supplies		1,000
TOTAL PSYCHOLOGIST SERVICES		$ 8,900

TOTAL INSTRUCTION	$ 160,700

PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

Contract Busing

TOTAL PUPIL TRANSPORTATION	$ 67,500

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

State Retirement @ 10.5% x .5 FTE	$ 630	
Teacher Retirement @ 18.8% x 3.28 FTE	16,920	
Social Security @ 7.33% x 3.78 FTE	7,037	
Workers' Compensation @ .31% x 3.78 FTE	298	
Life Insurance @ $31. x 5	155	
Health Insurance @ 2,200 x 4.5 FTE	9,900	
TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS		$ 34,940
TOTAL IMPLEMENTATION EXPENDITURES		$ 291,940

II. REVENUES

STATE FUNDING

Transportation @ 100%	$ 67,500	
High School of Excellence Aid @ 100%	224,440	
TOTAL IMPLEMENTATION REVENUES		$ 291,940

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

NORTHERN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

CURRICULUM PLANNERS

The Regional High School of Excellence Study Project is seeking to employ eight teachers to work as part-time curriculum planners for part of the 1986-87 school year. Planners must currently be full-time teachers in public schools or recently retired from teaching. Two teachers will work as a planning team, one serving as coordinator, in each of the four core curricular areas: English, social studies, math and science. A thematic approach unifying these four areas will be stressed. Courses will be designed to both challenge and stimulate academically talented students. Certification and a minimum of five years of teaching experience in the core curricular area is required. Stipend: $3,500 for each core area curriculum planner/coordinator; $2,500 for each core area curriculum planner. Planning will be coordinated through the Fredonia Central School District (LEA) and will involve some evening meetings. Written inquiries to: Dr. James M. Merrins, Executive Director; Regional High School of Excellence; 425 East Main Street; Fredonia, New York 14063.

NEW YORK APPENDIX, E1
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

JUDITH M. DEIULIO
EDUCATIONAL PLANNER

JAMES M. MERRINS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 3, 1986

Re:

Dear

The Regional High School of Excellence Study Project plans to conduct a pilot, or "trial run", of its proposed student selection process. The Fredonia Central School Board has agreed to permit us to pilot the process with Fredonia Central School District students.

For that purpose we have identified a group of eighth grade students with good academic ability in either or both math and reading. Your child fits the criteria for inclusion in this screening process.

The steps in the selection process, as outlined by the committee studying selection, are:

* the completion of an application, including responses to several essay questions;
* review of data from the school concerning the student's grade point average;
* submission of two teacher recommendations;
* taking the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) in a group with other students participating in the pilot study.

Your child's participation in the selection study will assist the study committee in finalizing the selection process and materials.

Participation in no way indicates that your child would be admitted to the proposed School of Excellence. However, the results of our assessment of your student's potential (including SAT scores) will be shared confidentially with you.

If you have any questions regarding the pilot study, please feel free to call me at 679-1581.

If you are willing to have your child participate in the pilot study, please complete the form below and return it in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope, by June 11, 1986.

Sincerely,

James M. Merrins
Project Director

- -

I give my permission for my child _____ to participate in the Regional High School of Excellence pilot study of the student selection process. I understand that his participation in the study will not indicate admittance to the proposed school.

_____ _____
(Parent or Guardian's Signature) (Date)

SYNOPSIS OF COMMENTS FROM THE STUDENT APPLICATION RATING FORM

1. The application was (Check one):

____ Very easy to complete.

____ Difficult to complete but the information is necessary.

____ Difficult to complete aqnd the information is unnecessary.

____ Hard to understand.

____ Other. Explain _____

2. List any question(s) which you thought were unnecessary.

3. List the question(s) you found the most difficult to answer

4. In what ways might the application form be improved

SYNOPSIS OF COMMENTS FROM THE STUDENT APPLICATION RATING FORM
(18 Respondents)

1. The application was (Check one):

5 Very easy to complete.

6 Difficult to complete but the information is necessary.

1 Difficult to complete and the information is unnecessary.

____ Hard to understand.

6 Other. Explain _____

I feel I was not old enough or experienced enough to answer some of the questions.

Easy but difficult to understand.

Some information was unnecessary.

Some questions were hard to complete but otherwise everything else was very easy to complete.

I had trouble on some questions, but found others not difficult at all.

Not hard or easy to complete but the information is necessary.

2. List any question(s) which you thought were unnecessary.

What hobbies and/or strong interests do you have?

What has been your greatest challenge in life to this point?

None.

Briefly describe your travel experiences and participation in extra-curricular activities, both in and out of school.

I thought the question that asked the awards and honors we have received was unnecessary.

The schools we had attended.

Other schools that you've attended.

What has been your greatest challenge in life to this point?

Honors and awards - it's like bragging about one's self.

None.

Have you taken a foriegn language? If so, what language?

Were none.

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point?

The essay question and what has been your greatest challenge in life to this point?

3. List the question (s) you found the most difficult to answer.

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point, What special abilities or interests do you have which would qualify you for entrance to the Regional High School of Excellence and the essay question.

The essay and my greatest challenge.

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point?

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point?

My greatest challenge in life.

1. Briefly describe your travel experiences and participation in extra-curricular activities.
2. What special abilities or interests do you have that qualify you for entrance to the Regional High School of Excellence.

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point?

Travel experiences and participation - I've traveled a lot and participated in many things. It's hard to put it all down.

What special abilities or interests do you have which would qualify you for entrance to the Regional High School of Excellence.

What special abilities or interests do you have which would qualify you for entrance. . .

Special abilites or interests to qualify for the Regional High School of Excellence.

I thought the question that asked what special abilities and interests I have which would qualify me for the Regional High School of Excellence, was the hardest to answer.

1. The personal statement question number 2.
2. Briefly describe your travel experiences and participation in extra-curricular activities, both in and out of school.

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point?

What special abilities or interests do you have which would qualify you for entrance to the Regional High School of Excellence.

What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point, and what special abilities or interests do you have which would qualify you for entrance to the Regional High School of Excellence.

The question that was most difficult for me to answer was "What has been your greatest challenge in life, to this point?"

The essay question.

4. In what ways might the application form be improved?

It is a good application form the way it is.

Be more clear.

Easier to complete.

I think it should be adjusted to middle school student sand not high school students, also they should give you more room to complete the questions.

I really do not see any way this application can be improved. All things on here are necessary.

Tell us how we did on the test at the top of this page.

No changes necessary.

Take out those questions written in two and three.

Omit some of the unnecessary questions.

You might want to consider having an interview following the application.

The form was quite good and does not need any major changes. It was clear and understandable.

To deal more specifically with individual academic areas.

On the essay, have more ideas to write about. Drop the question about my greatest challenge.

Ask what future plans are in life to possibly add courses to the Regional High School of Excellence.

APPENDIX F1

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

PARENT INTEREST SURVEY

It is proposed that the Regional High School of Excellence might involve students in a foundation of core courses, possibly based on a series of broad themes for the first two years. The amount of time spent in the foundation part of the program would decrease as the student progressed through the four-year program. There would be opportunity for the student to explore a variety of interests, and he/she might choose to spend much of his/her time in the last one or two years in one or two particular fields of concentration. (A student would attend the Regional High School of Excellence only in the morning and would return to his/her local high school in the afternoon for some courses, instruction and his/her extra-curricular activities.)

(PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THE FORM IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.)

1. As you consider the program outlined above, please rank order the following fields of concentration by numbering the top three areas you would like to see available for your child, 1 being highest and 3 being lowest:

☐ Mathematics	☐ Languages: Russian, Japanese, Chinese
☐ Sciences	☐ Languages: Greek, Latin
☐ Technology	☐ Liberal Arts (Humanities)
☐ Visual Arts	☐ Other _____
☐ Performing Arts	☐ Don't Know

2. What methods should be used to select students for a Regional School of Excellence? (check one or more)

☐ Tests	☐ Parent Recommendation
☐ Grades	☐ Interviews
☐ Teacher Recommendation	☐ Self-Nomination (through application or written essay, for example)

3. As a parent, what concerns might you have for your child if he/she were able to attend a Regional High School of Excellence?

4. If your child were selected to attend a Regional High School of Excellence, would you permit him/her to attend?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know, need more information

Why or Why not?

5. Do you think a Regional High School of Excellence should be developed in northern Chautauqua County?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. What questions do you have about the proposed Regional High School of Excellence?

Please circle the grade level(s) of children presently in school:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 College

School District _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone No. _____

DO YOU WISH TO BE PUT ON A MAILING LIST TO RECEIVE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE?

☐ Yes ☐ No

NOTE: Although we are asking for your name and school district, you will not be identified by name in any of our communications about this survey with school districts or the public.

11/18/85

RESULTS OF PARENT INTEREST SURVEY
37% returned (184 of 498)

Parental Choice for Curricular Areas

SCIENCES--142

1st 56

2nd 58

3rd 28

MATHEMATICS--116

1st 63

2nd 38

3rd 15

TECHNOLOGY--98

1st 24

2nd 26

3rd 48

LIBERAL ARTS--61

1st 11

2nd 16

3rd 34

PERFORMING ARTS--30

1st 6

2nd 11

3rd 13

LANGUAGES--29
Russian, Japanese, Chinese

1st 6

2nd 8

3rd 15

VISUAL ARTS--25

1st 5

2nd 10

3rd 10

LANGUAGES--16
Greek, Latin

1st 5

2nd 3

3rd 8

OTHER--16

1st 11

2nd 1

3rd 4

DON'T KNOW--3

1st 2

2nd

3rd 1

Parental Choice for Selection Procedures

149	Teacher Recommendation
116	Grades
101	Interviews
92	Tests
66	Self-nomination (essay, project, ect.)
34	Parent Recommendation
1	Guidance Counselor Recommendation
1	Peer Nomination

PARENTAL CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

Number of Questions	Questions
	Curriculum and its Evaluation
50	What will be the curriculum? Will a broad curriculum be available that avoids overspecialization and too narrow choices? What is the general purpose of the program? Will it be challenging and go beyond enrichment? Will it replace other courses? Will it not be just an add-on program of more work?
49	How will this program meet the state's requirements--Regents', etc. for credit and for graduation? How will the better colleges accept this program? What evaluation system will be used and how will it match the home school's system? Will students be placed by grade level or by ability?
6	Will Advanced Placement credit be given? Will it interfere with 3-1-3? What can it offer beyond AP and 3-1-3?
	Affective Needs of Students
51	What will be the social effects of the program? Will students feel pressure from their peers? Will they be able to maintain their ties with friends, activities and the home community in only one-half day? Will there be a sense of elitism with such a segregated group?
38	Won't this put a lot of extra responsibility and stress on the students? What happens if the student can't keep up? Will there be adequate support from the school for students who have to juggle everything and may be experiencing anxiety? What about exposing students to the problems of students from larger districts?
	Transportation
57	How will transportation be provided? Will students lose too much educational time in riding a bus? What about winter safety conditions?
	Articulation with the Home School
47	How will students keep up with their work at the home school? Will their local work suffer? Can they maintain their grades? How will they be able to schedule courses they need or want in the smaller home school? Will they have to make up work they miss? Will the program limit their overall education?

Location

25 What will the location of the program be? Will a new building be constructed?

14 Why was the north county selected? Why isn't _____ district involved?

Teaching Staff

31 How will the teachers be selected? What will be their qualifications, training and experience?

Funding

30 How will the program be funded--now and in the future? Will there be a tuition charge for students?

Selection and Class Size

15 What will the selection process be? Will the program be available to all students who are eligible?

10 How many students will be involved? Are there enough students for such a program? How large will the classes be?

Scheduling

11 What grades will be covered? What are the specific hours? Is one-half day long enough to cover the material? What about lunch? Will there be after-school commitments? Will student time be used efficiently?

4 Will there be flexibility in scheduling courses? Will students be able to select courses? Can they change as their interests change?

Miscellaneous

6 How long will this program last? Is it experimental?

5 What are other similar programs like? How do the students feel about them?

4 How soon will it start?

3 Can't this program be accomplished through intensive study at the local high school?

3 Will there be parental involvement to help make the program a success?

2 What will be the benefit to students?

1 Will this program just satisfy parents' ego needs?

1 How will they make the transition to college from this special environment?

1 Will planning/preparation be sufficient?

1 Will it be a summer program?

1 How politically controlled would it be?

1 Will students and their families be involved in the design and evaluation procedures?

1 What is the professional background of those involved in the study?

1 Why has it taken so long to do this?

Responses to Questions 4 and 5

	Total County (184 of 498 Surveys returned--37% of those mailed)		North County (110 of 272 Surveys returned--40% of those mailed)	
Q. 4. If your child were selected to attend a Regional High School of Excellence, would you permit him/her to attend?				
YES:	120	65%	72	65%
NO:	3	1%	--	--
DON'T KNOW:	62	33%	38	35%
NO RESPONSE	2	1%	--	--
Q. 5. Do you think a Regional High School of Excellence should be developed in northern Chautauqua County?				
YES:	146	80%	89	81%
NO:	10*	5%	1	1%
DON'T KNOW:	23**	13%	16	14%
NO RESPONSE	5	2%	4	4%

* Some of these said no because they think it should serve the whole county.

** These responses were written in by respondents as survey did not include this category.

Responses to Questions 4 and 5 by District

School District	Number Surveys Mailed	Responses to Question 4			Responses to Question 5		
		Y	N	D	Y	N	D
Brocton	18	3		3	5		1
Cassadaga	31	5		5	7	1	2
Dunkirk	27	12		7	16		2
Forestville	21	7		2	8		1
Fredonia	49	15		6	16		4
Mayville	17	4		1	4		1
Pine Valley	29	4		3	5		1
Ripley	20	8		3	11		
Silver Creek	23	3		2	5		
Westfield	37	11		6	12		4
* *							
Bemus Point	30	5		4	9		
Chautauqua	4			1	1		
Clymer	11	3	1	1	2	2	
Falconer	30	4		1	4	1	
Frewsburg	20	3		1	3		1
Jamestown	38	8	1	4	7	2	2
Panama	30	8		2	9		1
Sherman	18	4			3	1	
Southwestern	45	12	1	10	18	3	2
Unidentified		1			1		

Parent comment (with qualifiers removed):

The proposal for a Regional High School sounds encouraging and a step forward. I did not rank the subjects because of my basic educational philosophy and the lack in my son's educations.

I would hope that all students would receive a broad-based, multidisciplinary approach to learning. There is not enough in terms of problem-solving, thinking skills taught in the elementary grades. Also (the school) does not offer a fourth year history. I believe with the increasing amount of technology and specialization, we need an educational system which promotes understanding across disciplines and builds a base before we specialize. I believe that math/computer/ science majors should understand literature, music, art, history and have a foreign language, and the musically gifted should have some literacy on a computer, etc.

I believe that music, art, theater should be included. I believe the purpose of high school should be to encourage well-rounded, thinking people. The issues facing society are complex. I hope the educational system would prepare students for analyzing information, know where to turn for resources and enable sound decision-making and conceptualization of situations, themes, problems.

The idea of a Regional High School sounds excellent because students from various schools would be able to share ideas, have a better variety of subjects, and meet needs.

In terms of language - only Spanish is offered in (our school). I would be happy to see French and German offered on a regional level or the fourth year of a language. Philosophy for seniors would be interesting.

Basically, I care more about the framework and methods used in the program. If it were just more of the same traditional teaching methods which discourage creativity, excellence, questioning, I probably would not be supportive of the idea. My son could get that in (our school) and the additional subject matter without a changed methodology wouldn't be worth his time spent in travel.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

PARENT SURVEY—II

1. In considering whether or not you would wish your child to attend the Regional High School of Excellence, please rate each of the following factors, by numbering them 1 to 5 (with 1 as your highest priority):

   __ the school's curriculum (course of study)

   __ the quality of the teaching staff

   __ the amount of time spent to reach the school each day

   __ interest and enthusiasm of your child to attend

   __ acceptance of the program by the student's home school

   __ acceptance of the school's program by colleges and universities

2. In considering the amount of time to be spent by a student traveling from home to the Regional High School of Excellence each morning, place a check before the time period representing the <u>greatest</u> amount of time you would want your child to travel.

   ☐ 20–30 minutes ☐ 30–45 minutes

   ☐ 45–60 minutes

3. It is proposed that a Parents' Council be formed for the Regional High School of Excellence to play a role similar to a PTA. Do you think this is a good idea?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Would you be willing to take an active part in such a Parents' Council?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. It is proposed that a member of the Parents' Council should be selected to act as a parent representative on the Regional High School of Excellence's Board of Governance. (The Board of Governance would act as a School Board and would be responsible for running the Regional High School of Excellence.) Do you agree with this idea?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. It is proposed that all parents whose children are students in the Regional High School of Excellence be provided with an informative program about the nature and needs of very bright students, suggestions for parents and the curriculum of the Regional High School of Excellence. <u>If</u> your child were a student, would you agree to attend such a program?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. If yes, how many one-hour sessions do you think should be provided?

☐ one ☐ two-three ☐ four-five ☐ six or more

8. The committee studying student selection is considering a pilot study, of a limited number of seventh and eighth graders, for the process they are considering. This pilot study would involve students' taking a three-hour test on a Saturday morning, completing a sample application, and submitting testing and grade data from the present school. Would you be willing to have one or more of your children participate in this process, even though it would not involve actual selection for the proposed school?

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. It is proposed that an in-depth orientation program be given incoming students to enlighten them on such matters as:

1) Scope of the program,
2) Expectations of the school,
3) Availability of guidance for the parent about peer relationships or social problems of the gifted.

Do you agree or disagree?

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

10. Do you have any suggestions for the school's planners at this point?

11. Please feel free to list here any questions and concerns about the school you may still have.

School District _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone No. _____

NOTE: Although we are asking for your name and school district, you will not be identified by name in any of our communications about this survey with school districts or the public.

RESULTS OF SECOND PARENT SURVEY (MAY, 1986)
(also see attached)

Approximately 145 mailed
52 returned

Responses may not total 52 since not everyone responded to every question.

Number responses from each district:

Brocton:	4
Cassadaga Valley:	6
Dunkirk:	9
Forestville:	4
Fredonia:	10
Mayville:	3
Pine Valley:	1
Ripley:	3
Silver Creek:	3
Westfield:	9

Responses to Question #1:

	Number of respondents rating item in importance to them as:					Point Rating (with 260 as highest possible total, 52 as lowest):
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Item A (the school's curriculum):	22	12	14	4	2	210
Item B (quality of the teaching staff):	15	15	14	9	0	195
Item C (amount of time spent to reach school each day):	0	5	10	4	17	75
Item D (interest and enthusiasm of your child to attend):	25	10	7	5	5	201
Item E (acceptance of program by: student's home school):	4	8	8	7	19	109
Item F (acceptance of school's program: by colleges and universities)	12	11	8	10	9	157

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 2 THROUGH 9

Q. 2. In considering the amount of time to be spent by a student traveling from home to the Regional High School of Excellence each morning, place a check before the time period representing the greatest amount of time you would want your child to travel.

20-30 MINUTES: 25

30-45 MINUTES: 19

45-60 MINUTES: 8

Q. 3. It is proposed that a Parents' Council be formed for the Regional High School of Excellence to play a role similar to a PTA. Do you think this is a good idea?

YES: 42

NO: 8

Q. 4. Would you be willing to take an active part in such a Parents' Council?

YES: 31

NO: 15

Q. 5. It is proposed that a member of the Parents' Council should be selected to act as a parent representative on the Regional High School of Excellence's Board of Governance. (The Board of Governance would act as a School Board and would be responsible for running the Regional High School of Excellence.)

YES: 45

NO: 6

Q. 6. It is proposed that all parents whose children are students in the Regional High School of Excellence be provided with an informative program about the nature and needs of very bright students, suggestions for parents and the curriculum of the Regional High School of Excellence. If your child were a student, would you agree to attend such a program?

YES: 50

NO: 1

Q. 7. If yes, how many one-hour sessions do you think should be provided?

ONE: 6

TWO-THREE: 27

FOUR-FIVE: 9

SIX OR MORE: 1

Q. 8. The committee studying student selection is considering a pilot study, of a limited number of seventh and eight graders, for the process they are considering. This pilot study would involve students' taking a three-hour test on a Saturday morning, completing a sample application, and submitting testing and grade data from the present school. Would you be willing to have one or more of your children participate in this process, even though it would not involve actual selection for the proposed school?

YES: 42

NO: 5

Q. 9. It is proposed that an in-depth orientation program be given incoming students to enlighten them on such matters as:

1) Scope of the program,
2) Expectations of the school,
3) Availability of guidance for the parent about peer relationships or social problems of the gifted.

Do you agree or disagree?

AGREE: 50

DISAGREE: 1

SYNOPSIS OF COMMENTS FROM THE SECOND PARENT SURVEY,
CONDUCTED SPRING 1986

Concern expressed regarding the selection and hiring of qualified teachers for the Regional High School of Excellence.

Parents' Council should have a more active role than a PTA usually does in such matters as curriculum, teacher selection, materials and course content.

Regional High School of Excellence should be a self contained, full-day program similar to Buffalo's magnet schools in philosophy.

Concern about the [negative] "pull-out" aspects of the program.

Would students be missing too much by not being a full part of their own class?

Concerns about the socialization of the child.

Concerns about having program every day of the week - what about every other day?

Concern about daily disruption, travel time, and need for student to interact with two groups of peers on a daily basis. Program should either be full-time, or on a full day basis 2 days a week.

What happens to students if their district decides to pull out of the program? Will attendance at the Regional High School of Excellence have any impact on admission to the college of the student's choice? Will college level credit be given for any of the coursework?

Parents of gifted children need more information on their child's needs and abilities. Concern that a child may be pushed beyond his/her limit if not properly identified for the program.

How many students per class?

Impact of time spent at Regional High School of Excellence relative to normal school curriculum: grades, extra curricular activities, peer pressure, etc.

Cost per student? Would more students stand to gain if money was spent on programs to help all?

Will it affect school taxes?

Funding concerns - what happens if funding sources are cut off?

Benefits of program vs. cost of program?

Parent comment:

Item 1: Priorities

School Curriculum:

Will the curriculum be such that pupils unable to complete the RHSE program will not lose credit in other school systems?

Will the curriculum be published and available to all participating school systems?

Will the curriculum adequately prepare pupils for Regents' competency/diploma requirements?

Teaching Staff:

Will the RHSE staff be autonomous from all component districts?

Who will hire faculty? Who will evaluate faculty? Who will tenure faculty? Will faculty be specially trained and, when necessary, properly certificated?

Item 2: X

Item 3: Parents' Council

The idea of a Parents' Council is meritorious. Will the Council be involved in mainly information type activities, political activities, or evaluative/police activities?

Item 4: X

Item 5: Board of Governance

What authority will the BOG have? Policy? Hiring/Firing? Evaluation? Taxation?

Who will serve on the BOG? Will each component district be fairly represented? For example, will one board member from each component district serve? Will BOG board members be appointed or elected? By whom? For what term?

I would only agree with a BOG if said BOG was responsible to each component BOE. The RHSE, similar to BOCES, is, in my opinion, an organization within the

state that is composed of component districts for the purpose of serving the component districts. The current move to make BOCES a regional arm of NYSED is another example of bureaucratic takeover, which may ultimately result in less community control of education, less sensitivity to the needs of each community and each component district, and greater dependence on the state and its (sometimes incredulous) mandates. The RHSE should answer first to the components it serves, second to the state super-structure.

Item 6: X

Item 7: Programs for Parents' Information

The nature and needs of pupils chosen for the RHSE may be different from those pupils in regular high school. Parents deserve to know current empirical data relative to the specific nature and needs of such children.

Item 8: X

Item 9: X

Item 10: Suggestions

Don't keep the program in a closet. Plenty of PR to explain and sell the program. Plenty of room for local involvements in planning and implementation.

Item 11: Questions and Concerns

Individualized education has its place. However, graduates of the program will still have college freshman and sophomore courses to contend with. Will they be prepared to do what college level faculty will demand, which in many cases is not individualized?

Is it necessary to have a four-year program?

Children having difficulty in the program: Will they be allowed to return full-time to regular high school? Will they have lost credits and/or required courses?

Children not identified prior to freshman year: Will they have the option, if qualified to enter the program in the sophomore and/or junior years?

Children new to the district: Will they be able to qualify for the program if in their freshman and/or junior year?

How will children be identified for the program? Admittance examination? Local faculty, guidance,

psychological, administrative nomination? Parent nomination? What items will be considered: Age? Intellectual development (and how assessed)? Social development (and how assessed)? Emotional development (and how assessed)? Academic achievement? A combination of the above?

I hope you find the above questions valuable in your quest for providing appropriate education for the gifted/talent end of the spectrum. Many you may have already answered and/or addressed. I would suggest that whatever meetings and planning sessions you have include formal minutes. Also, a newsletter keeping local boards and faculties informed of progress and decisions would be helpful.

CONFERENCE CALL: Mr. Jack Thompson, President
Parents' Association
Calasanctius School
Buffalo, New York
October 7, 1985

(Summary of questions and responses)

Q: IN GENERAL, WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS THE CENTRAL ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE TOTAL CALASANCTIUS PROGRAM?

A: It is a greater role than is usual in a "magnet" school. Parents serve on the board of trustees, on committees such as management, in the parents' association, and in fund-raising. There is a deep commitment but not for all 100 percent of the parents. [Tuition today in the Upper School (high school) is $5,000.] There are two spaces on the Board of Trustees reserved for parents who are appointed yearly by the Parents' Association. (Other board spaces are elected positions of two-three years.)

Q: IN WHAT WAYS DO PARENTS PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL PROGRAM?

A: Some are internal employees such as the cook and some of the teachers. The curriculum and management committees are built around parents. The response from parents to the annual giving campaign is approximately 30-40 percent. The scholarship aid fund last year raised over $100,000 through fund-raising activities.

Some parents provide volunteer services such as manning the playground after school for 45 minutes before all the buses have arrived. Others help with mailings and with the newsletter. There are two to three activities each week which involve parents in a volunteer capacity.

Q: DO PARENTS PLAY A FORMAL ROLE IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE?

A: Yes, parents serve on the Board of Trustees, on the management committee and are involved with the Middle States evaluation.

Q: MAY PARENTS PARTICIPATE AS LITTLE OR AS MUCH AS THEY WISH IN THE ON-GOING PROGRAM(s)?

A: Yes. Parents of students who live quite a distance and are bused 45 minutes to school or who are boarding with a family in town necessarily do not participate as much as those who are closer do. The Association would like to see even greater involvement by most parents. However, some parents may invest too much time in the school and may actually interfere with the on-going educational process.

Calasanctius uses a "grade" system of reporting rather than a "pass-fail" system. The student reporting period is 6-8 weeks, but there is a continuing relationship between teachers and parents. It appears that formal contacts regarding grades are made about twice as often as in the public schools.

Q: HAVE PARENTS BEEN INVOLVED AS TEACHERS, AS MENTORS, OR IN PROVIDING INTERNSHIPS?

A: Yes. Starting at ninth grade, students are required to participate in a seminar kind of situation. By 12th grade this is a year-long activity requiring the writing of a major paper. (One of these was submitted to NASA for review and another student worked at Roswell Park Hospital.) Parents are involved in these seminar activities as mentors or in using their contacts to set up the learning experiences.

Q: AS A PARENT, WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS THE MOST POSITIVE ASPECT OF THE CALASANCTIUS EXPERIENCE?

A: The concern of the whole school community for each other. Partly this is built through the field trip experiences each youngster has beginning at age 5 (everybody goes for two nights) and lengthening until by the junior and senior years everyone goes for almost four weeks. (They use their own school bus.) This experiences help kids grow. Some of the teachers have been there for 20 of the school's 28 years of existence; they fall in love with each child and the kids reflect much of this feeling. Friendships made here last a long time.

Q: WHAT CONCERNS HAVE YOU FOUND THAT PARENTS HAVE ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THIS KIND OF SPECIALIZED PROGRAM?

A: Primarily, "pulling kids out of the mainstream" and sending them to another area. The students are there all day and then come home. Their local school district friends are somewhat limited. Birthday parties of their school friends are scattered all over the city. This does put some pressure on the kids. The concept of "busing" is a negative one among all parents anywhere. The problems are more "a perception than a reality."

Q: IF A PARENT WERE RELUCTANT TO ALLOW HIS CHILD TO ATTEND SUCH A SCHOOL, HOW WOULD YOU SUGGEST THIS RELUCTANCE BE COUNTERED?

A: Transportation might be perceived as a problem. Also, some teachers pressure the children for being away from school for part of the day. The kids handle all this. Many kids who attend Calasanctius were youngsters found through referrals--those who were bright but bored and were a problem at home, in the school, and in the community. Parents are pleased there is a solution to the problem.

Admission to top colleges should not be a problem, especially if the youngster has a personal interview or writes an essay. Sometimes there is a difficulty involved in explaining the concept of the school. Lack of a good extracurricular sports program might be a problem for some students.

APPENDIX F4

January, 1986

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EXCELCO DEVELOPMENTS, INC.

MILL STREET • SILVER CREEK, N. Y. 14136 • AREA CODE 716-934-2651

October 22, 1985

Dear

The New York State Legislature has appropriated funds for grants to study the concept of Regional High Schools of Excellence which will offer intensive, specialized programs to selected students to attain high academic achievement. The schools will provide a challenging curriculum characterized by innovative teaching strategies, stimulating learning resources and participation of parents, business, industry, and higher education.

The State Education Department solicited 740 school districts requesting study grant proposals.

A team consisting of Brocton, Forestville, Fredonia, Pine Valley, Ripley, Silver Creek and Westfield school districts submitted a proposal. Under the proposal northern Chautauqua County students would spend their mornings at the School of Excellence and the remainder of the day in their home school studying extra subjects and participating in home school activities.

We're pleased to inform you that our local proposal was ranked 4th in the state and we have received one of the 14 grants awarded.

This is a unique opportunity for our community.

We are asking you to complete the enclosed survey concerning business/industrial participation in the project.

Business/Industrial participation might include:

1. Student internships in a business setting
2. Student work with a business/industrial representative in a student/mentor relationship
3. Actual classroom instruction by business/industrial representatives

We need your support and ideas.

We have enclosed a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of the survey.

Our staff will make a follow-up call if you have not returned the enclosed questionnaire by November 8, 1985.

Thanks.

Jim Mervis, Executive Director
Regional High School of
Excellence Study Project

Russ Newman, Chairman
Networking Committee
~~Regional~~ High School of
Excellence Study Project

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

BUSINESS-INDUSTRY SURVEY

(Check one or more as applicable)

☐ I understand and support the concept of a New York State Regional High School of Excellence. If possible and practical I will support the High School of Excellence in the following manner:

- ☐ discuss cooperative programs between our company and the Regional High School of Excellence.
- ☐ help locate mentors for students.
- ☐ arrange student internships in my company.
- ☐ provide personnel to teach in the Regional High School of Excellence.

☐ I believe that a Regional High School of Excellence would be helpful to Northern Chautauqua County's business climate.

☐ I support the concept of a Regional High School of Excellence but do not foresee a formal relationship between the school and our company.

☐ Please keep me informed of your progress in planning for the Regional High School of Excellence.

Suggestions (or separate letter)_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Business _____ _____
Signed

Number of Employees _____ _____
Title

NEW YORK
REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Fredonia, New York 14063
(716) 679-1581

FACT SHEET

- There are seven school districts currently participating in the Regional High School of Excellence project:

  Brocton
  Forestville
  Fredonia
  Pine Valley
  Ripley
  Silver Creek
  Westfield

- The Northern Chautauqua County project was one of 14 study grants awarded by the state.

- Based on the merits of our proposal our project was ranked 4th in the state by the funding committee.

- The time frame for implementation of the Regional High School of Excellence is:

  1985-86--a year of studying the concept;
  1986-87--a year of planning the school (hiring staff, development of the curriculum);
  1987-88--the starting year for the School of Excellence.

- The student body will be selected from the most academically able students (1 - 3% of the total high school student body in a school district).

- Students from all Northern Chautauqua County will be eligible and encouraged to attend.

- Classes will be held for 1/2-day, mornings only. Students will return to the home school in the afternoon for classes, sports and extracurricular activities.

- The curriculum will be innovative and will feature:

  interdisciplinary approaches;
  the development of student research methods skills;
  the development of student creative/productive thinking and problem-solving;
  independent study.

- Teachers of English, mathematics, social studies and science in the Regional High School of Excellence will be from local school districts. Personnel from business, industry and higher education will teach in specialty areas.

- Students will be involved in mentorships, internships and use of a variety of community resources.

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